

THE LONDON READER

of Literature, Science, Art, and General Information.

No. 32.—VOL. II.]

FOR THE WEEK ENDING DECEMBER 19 1863.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



CHRISTMAS GATHERING AT ROYSTON HALL.

To the general call to happiness, the bustle of the spirits, and stir of the affections, which prevail at this period, what bosom can remain insensible? It is, indeed, the season of regenerated feeling—the season for kindling it, not merely by the fire of hospitality in the hall, but by the genial flame of charity in the heart; the scene of early love again rises green to memory, beyond the sterile waste of years; and the idea of home, fraught with the fragrance of its happiness and joys, reanimates the drooping spirit.

No doubt, to most of us, this present Christmas comes as a special witness of important changes. There is no denying the fact that we are, in the first place, a year older than when we heard our last Christmas sermon, and ate our last Christmas dinner. We may just have got into our "teens," or out of them, or attained our legal majority, or emerged from a state of hopeful spinsterhood into that of confirmed old maidenness. We may have braved a competitive examination, or come into a legacy. We may have been "crossed in love," or passed into the blissful condition of a "beloved object," or the happy parent of twins! Some of the glasses in the kaleidoscope of existence will undoubtedly have been moved, and this Christmas will not find us exactly what we were last.

In the hall of Royston Manor the whole of the family were assembled on Christmas Eve, and as the night was cold without, it was determined that it should be warm within, especially as many

friends of the squire had come from far and near, some by chance and some by design, to spend a happy evening, and so anticipate the advent of Christmas. The lamps were not yet lit; but a huge log blazed in the fire-place and diffused throughout the apartment a glow which, with the light that accompanied it, was exceedingly agreeable and cheerful.

"Now, my assembled friends," said the squire, with a happy smile on his face, "I think that I shall relate a story, in the hope that it may act as a warning to us all, but more especially to the young, never to play with weapons in which there may be concealed or unknown danger. I shall relate it as if it were told by one of the youths who played a part in it."

MY SISTER'S GHOST.

THE SQUIRE'S STORY.

I WILL so far disclose family secrets, said George Hatfield, as to say that, not having any very brilliant prospect to look forward to in the way of inheritance, I was educated for the merchant service, at the Grind-em-up Academy, Principal, Doctor Short-hose.

At this school there was one boy, whom I suppose I may call a gentleman's son, for he was the son of a colonel doing service in India. His name was Harry Mervyn; he was about fourteen—tall, fair-haired, bright-eyed, and as bold as a lion.

But he had one failing—he was terribly afraid of ghosts.

Often in the night would he astound his sleeping companions by starting up, his eyes staring wildly

out of his head, his mouth open, and his whole body in a profuse perspiration. He had seen a ghost! He said so, at least; and his description of these apparitions was so terribly vivid that he was half-believed.

Well, it was arranged, that as Harry Mervyn had but few friends in England he should go home with me to spend Christmas, for I had picked him out of the whole school as my particular chum, and had often talked of him at home, and, indeed, made something like a little idol of him.

So when we "broke-up," Harry's two boxes and my two boxes were hoisted on to the same coach, and we went off home together.

My father lived in a large old-fashioned house, in the outskirts of a great manufacturing town—a house with many windows and passages, and a great dormer roof.

The bedrooms were large, lofty, with plenty of tall cupboards and recesses, and with furniture and hangings of a huge and sombre description, suggesting ghostly hiding-places.

Especially was this the case in the room appropriated to myself and Harry Mervyn, and the first night we slept together in it, Harry remarked upon the fact somewhat ominously.

It was his fancy to carry about with him—quite unknown to his elders—a small pocket-pistol, and this pistol he placed, jokingly as I thought, on a table by the bedside.

"That'll do for the burglars, George," he said. But he looked about the room much as though he thought it would do for anything else that might happen to turn up.

I was a year or two younger than Harry, and I rather fancy I was secretly gratified by the notion of sleeping within a yard of a loaded pistol. At any rate I made no objection to its being where it was. As soon as we woke in the morning the pistol was carefully put aside, and when we went out into the field it was fired off and reloaded.

A remarkably pleasant Christmas Day we passed. After the dinner to which I have alluded, the customary games went on. Snapdragon, forfeits, blind-man's-buff, and last, not least, the mistletoe, all came in for their due share of honour. And I particularly observed that, at the latter game, Harry was a perfect glutton!

How many times he kissed my sister Fanny under the mistletoe, I am afraid to recollect. She was lively and mischievous, and fond of practical jokes, and I noticed that, hearing incidentally of Harry's falling in the ghost matter, she rallied him upon it more than once, and said she should like to play him a trick, and make his curly hair stand up straight, and give him a good frightening! He returned this rallying after his own fashion, by catching her whenever he could under the mistletoe, and so "paying her out."

I remember that the clock on the stairs struck twelve as we all went up-stairs to bed. My sister Fanny's room was next to that in which Harry and I slept, and, as we bade her good-night, she whispered something in my ear, the purport of which I could not exactly catch, but I fancied she said, "You'll know who it is!—don't be frightened!"

Well, Harry and I were soon between the sheets, and the pistol was placed as usual on the table at Harry's side.

It was a clear, frosty night, and the moonbeams came slanting in through the lofty windows, making two broad pathways of light upon the floor, and throwing the bed considerably into shadow. Harry seemed wakeful, and began to talk of what was to be done on the morrow; but I believe he found me a bad companion, for I was soon asleep.

Perhaps it was an over-dose of plum-pudding; perhaps it was the mince-pies; but I know I was restless and inclined to dream. I am convinced I was dreaming something unpleasant, when I distinctly felt a pressure on my chest, and, opening my eyes, I saw Harry sitting up in bed, staring straight at the door, and moving his hand noiselessly towards the table.

I could then hear a low, creaking sound, as though the door was being opened gently, and I could feel my heart beat like an engine, and a cold perspiration came upon my forehead. I rose up a little, and then I saw, stepping noiselessly in at the doorway, a muffled-up figure, in a long, dark wrapper. The figure made another step into the room, came across one of the broad paths of moonlight, and approached the bed.

I could not help turning slightly to look at Harry, and I saw that his hand was upon the pistol! His eyes were fixed steadily upon the moving object, and his arm seemed mechanically to draw up towards his body, and his finger to seek the trigger. I could not for the life of me move or cry out. All I could do was to clench my hands tightly, hold my breath hard, and look fearfully towards the muffled figure.

There was a report, a flash, a pitiful scream, and I know not what else, for I fainted.

Oh! that scene in the bright moonlight, when my father came rushing in, bewildered, to find the laughing daughter he had parted from a few minutes ago lying motionless on the floor, with her hand pressed to her shoulder, and her face pallid with the look of death! It was well for me that I had some occupation; that, dressing myself with a speed that I never could master at the Grind-em-up Academy, I ran to the nearest surgeon, and brought him back with me at a gallop.

When I returned, there was Harry still sitting up in bed, too terrified to cry; the pistol still warm on the counterpane, and my mother and father supporting on their knees the half-conscious Fanny. They had unfasted her dress, and were looking at two or three small black spots on her shoulder, while the servants were bathing her forehead, and reviving her with smelling salts.

But, oh! how thankful I was when I heard the surgeon's consoling words; when my mother's tears began to fall less frequently; and I could see my sister's blue eyes looking from face to face with dreamy bewilderment. Presently the poor girl was carried back to her bedroom, and, turning towards Harry, I saw that he had left the bed, and was rapidly dressing.

"I had scarcely time to ask 'Where are you going?' when he rushed past me, and until I returned to the Grind-em-up Academy, I saw him no more.

Now, it is very singular that that very Harry Mervyn should now be my brother-in-law, and that Fanny, from whose shoulder half-a-dozen small shot

were extracted, should be Mrs. Harry Mervyn. Harry has even grown so callous upon the incidents of that terrible night, that he has been heard to say he "marked her for his own!" and, true enough, there are still the marks upon her shoulder. But to this day he scouts the idea of having a pistol in his bedroom, and as to Fanny, she says that her narrow escape of being a real ghost makes her shudder at the idea of enacting a sham one!

The whole company were so pleased with the squire's story, and felt so much enjoyment in the agreeable yet strange visions which it had suggested to their minds, that they resolved to pass, at any rate, a large portion of the evening in telling stories, and the one which the squire had just related recalled to the memory of Ralph Mitlington, a gentleman who had just returned from New Zealand, to say that he could tell them something real—an adventure which had happened to himself among the natives of the distant country whence he had come. This gentleman had adopted New Zealand for the land of his future residence, and had now paid only a visit to England in order to espouse one of the sweet daughters of the squire, to whom, for some years, he had been betrothed. He was a fine-looking man, with a large black beard, which now reached to his breast, but which, if he lived long enough and gave it fair play, would infallibly descend to his girdle. Having but recently come off his voyage, he was bronzed a little from the effects of wind and weather, and as he had for some time been a stranger to his "dear native shore," considerable interest was felt even in the expectation of hearing a real story of the New Zealanders.

THE MAORI COURT-MARTIAL.

RALPH'S STORY.

IN the year 18—, I happened to have some business, on account of which it was necessary that I should visit Auckland. I accordingly proceeded there, and was certainly not struck by its beauty or convenience, for I had never been an admirer of wooden huts and quagmires. However, the people were well enough, and I soon made plenty of friends, one of whom, Mr. Mitlington, invited me to visit him in the bush, as he was not overmuch troubled with society.

Such an invitation was anything but distasteful to me, and having at length finished my business in town, I started off to enjoy myself in the country. A sailing-boat was my mode of transport, as Mitlington lived but a short distance from the sea-shore; moreover, if I had at all wished to go by land, I shouldn't have found the slightest apology for a road. So, one bright morning, I left Auckland, our little craft, with all sail set, bounding along as if she, too, felt the exhilarating influence of a southern atmosphere when tempered by a southern breeze. Fortunately, this breeze continued, and by the middle of the day we sighted the welcome smoke which assured us that Mitlington was not forgetful of our creature comforts; and our appetites being pretty keen, we lost not a moment, I can assure you, in landing. Having hauled up our boat on the beach, we made the best of our way to the house, which was comfortable if not grand, and where we met with a hearty welcome and a well-spread table.

Our dinner occupied us for some time, and it was late in the afternoon before the men whom I engaged to bring me began to think of returning. When they did, a considerable difficulty arose, for, on going down to the beach the boat was missing. This occasioned much astonishment, but, after many surmises and suggestions, it was at length resolved that the boat had not been hauled beyond high-water mark, and consequently that the tide had carried it off. This conclusion we afterwards found cause to alter, as will be seen. However, time pressed, and we resolved to take Mitlington's boat and search along the coast for our missing property. After rowing for some distance, we were about to desist for the night, when we caught sight of the "waif" lying on the beach in such a position that it might either have been stranded by the waves, or placed there by human agency. The latter appeared the most probable, for, as we landed, a perfect chorus of yells saluted our ears, and looking round, we were disagreeably surprised to see a troop of at least fifty Maories appear from behind the rocks and bear down upon us. The leader was a fine, stalwart man, standing above six feet high, and magnificently proportioned, as most of the New Zealand natives are. Turning to his band, he motioned them to stop, and then with a haughty step he advanced to me, saying, in the Maori language, "White man, the Maori rangatira (chief) claims that boat."

Understanding the language, and having some slight acquaintance with the Maori customs, I was able to answer him, and I said:

"The white man made it. It is his."

"I should here explain that oratory is held in high estimation among the Maories, and that nothing pleases a rangatira more than to have an opportunity

of displaying his eloquence. In the most approved style the chief resumed his discussion as follows:

"You see the rangatira. He is great. He has many servants. The sun comes from the waters to give him light. The trees grow to give him fruit. When he would eat, the fishes come quick to his hook. When he would fight, his enemies come to be killed. The great waters are afraid of him. They wish to make peace. They bring him a boat. He is pleased. He keeps it."

Now, no doubt this speech-making was very convincing to his followers, but I didn't view the subject in the same light, so I replied, "The white man takes it!" and, putting my shoulder to the boat, I commenced, with the help of my men, to launch it. The launching did not proceed very far, as in another moment I was quietly lying on my back, having been tossed clear over the boat by the orator's sneaky arm. This was a sort of thing I had never been accustomed to, and, therefore, disregarding the dictates of prudence, I jumped up, "squared" at the chief, and succeeded in planting one straight from the shoulder, which "floored" him.

The result was, of course, our seizure by the infuriated natives; but as they had, even at that time, learned to respect our Government, they refrained from doing us any bodily harm, but led us up to the English commissioner, who was living on the outskirts of the province, for the purpose of settling all disputes with the natives. He was simply supported by moral force—no great support there—and so the Maori views of law were often in the ascendant.

The rude court was formed in the front of his hut. An arm-chair which had been brought from Auckland, and which the Maories regarded with great awe, was placed for the commissioner. At a short distance in the front of this arm-chair stood my accuser and myself, while on every side appeared a threatening army of natives, who had gathered together in great numbers when they heard of the occurrence.

The proceedings commenced by the commissioner calling upon the injured chieftain to state his complaint. Expecting to hear some claim made to the boat, I was quite taken aback when he spoke thus:

"This Maories cry for vengeance. The rangatira is holy. In war, in peace, the man that strikes the rangatira dies. The great fathers of the Maories have said so. Do I speak well?"

The question met with a grave and dignified assent from the old men of the tribe who stood in the front of the circle. Thus encouraged, he proceeded:

"I stood by the great waters. I looked up. The birds flew fast away. They feared to share the air which the rangatira breathed. I looked down. The waves drew back. The shore was the rangatira's. He trod there. I looked on the land. The trees, the men, bent down. I looked on the great waters. They were troubled at my look. They hastened, they brought an offering to the rangatira. It was a boat. They laid it at my feet. I took it. The white man comes to take it. He lifts his hands. He strikes the rangatira. The birds, the air, the waves, the shore, the trees, the men, and the great waters, saw it done. They shake. They are afraid. They say, 'He strikes the holy rangatira, he must die.' I have finished."

I was at once seized, and although of considerably more than average strength, I was motionless as a statue in the grasp of four athletic natives, two on each side. The accusing chieftain seized his axe, made from the sacred greenstone, which is highly-prized by the rangatiras, and, poised it, was about to deliver that blow which is never known to fail in dealing instant death, occasionally even cleaving to the chin, when the commissioner motioned to one of the oldest men present, who rushed forward, and stepping in front of me, said, "Did not my brother hear? The white man must speak to the Maories. The white father says so." The would-be executioner lowered his axe. I was released for the moment, but hope almost forsook me, when I heard a universal exclamation of, "It is good. He speaks before he dies." Here was a very unpromising jury. Not being so well read in Maori, as in English law, I was somewhat at a loss, but necessity being the mother of invention, I gave vent to my injured feelings in this manner:

"I speak to the great Maories. They have a law. It is good and holy. I bind before it, and I ask my great Maori brothers to put it in force. If they do not, the sun will look down to-morrow, and he will see that the Maories are a people who have no holy law. They crawl. They do not walk. He will go away from them. The moon, the stars, will no longer serve them. The birds, the fishes, will all say, 'the Maories crawl.' Do I speak well?"

A vehement cry of approbation answered me, not however, unmingled with surprise; for they could not comprehend why I was so anxious to be executed. I proceeded:

"Yes, my Maori brothers hear that I speak well. I will speak better, I will open their ears, their eyes. That rangatira (pointing to my accuser) has shut

them. The Maori law says that the rangatira is sacred. I am a white rangatira. In my country the earth shakes when I walk. I want rain. I look up. The rain comes. I want sun. I look up. The sun comes. I am holy. That rangatira has raised his hand against me. He has thrown me in the air. I no longer stood. I, a rangatira, my back touched the ground. I claim his life!"

The tables were completely turned. The commissioner rose in such a hurry to congratulate me, that he overturned his seat of justice. My companions in misfortune rushed forward, and almost embraced me, while, at a sign from the old chiefs, my late triumphant enemy was brought before me in the dread predicament from which I had so recently escaped. He looked so very crestfallen, that I was unable to refrain from a burst of laughter, on which, he hastened to inform me that by another provision of the same law, his fate lay entirely in my hands, and that, if I chose to exercise it, I had the power of pardon. I was pleased enough to hear this, and making him the object of my clemency, only told him to prepare our boats for sea before he departed. He was more than willing to do this, and having finished his task, came to the house where we were enjoying the best supper the commissioner could provide, and insisted upon an enormous amount of embracing and nose-rubbing, before he would leave me.

His companions had previously gone with many expressions of respect and attachment, and so we were at last left to enjoy our grog, and to laugh (though I could not laugh quite as heartily as usual, for the next day or two) over the incidents of the court-martial.

Whether Ralph Maitland had improvised his own poetical speech which he had just delivered, we cannot tell, but all who heard it said, "it was very good, very good indeed," and concurred in the trite maxim that "necessity is the mother of invention," which they applied to him on the momentous occasion when it was called forth.

"Your story," said another gentleman, who sat by the side of his wife, and who had for many years been the husband of the eldest daughter of the squire, "recalls to my mind an event which I never think of without painful emotions."

"What is it?" several exclaimed at once.

"Well, I have never told it before, not even to you Julia," he said, with great tenderness, at the same time gently laying his hand upon his wife's shoulders.

"You have told me much, Frederick," she said, "especially about your adventures in Italy; but you may not have told me the circumstance to which you now specially allude."

"No, my dear, I never did, and think I will not now."

"Oh yes, do Fred!" entreated the youngest son of the squire's family.

"We are all going to tell stories, Frederick," said his wife, "and if you will tell yours, I shall then tell mine."

"Agreed," cried Frederick, striking his knee with the palm of his hand, as if he were closing a bargain, and thus began:

THE TRAITOR'S DEATH.

FREDERICK'S STORY.

THAT there were regularly organized bands of murderers and assassins, counterfeiters and perpetrators of all manner of crime in some parts of the Italian States is not unknown to all in the least conversant with its history. Yet few know how perfectly these bands were formed, how systematic their proceedings, how perfect their laws of government, how cautiously their grips and passwords were given, and how fearful the oaths of fidelity taken, and, if broken, punished.

One who knew all these fearful secrets, when life was passing away from him like a dream within the walls of a prison, where he was expiating the crime of having counterfeited the good golden and silver coin of the country, revealed the fearful end of one who had broken his oath and thereby betrayed his comrades to the power of the outraged laws. It is some time since I heard the story, but even his words have not as yet faded from memory.

"Listen to me," said the dying man, while the breath came hot and fitfully from his fever-parched lips. "There is one act of my life, one scene I was an actor in, that gleams now before my brain as if it burned with the fires. Oh, God! that I could blot it out for ever. But it may not be! Listen, then, and pray for me."

"Nay, don't interrupt me," he continued, as I strove to calm him. "Keep silent, for all I have to say must be said very quickly. I was one of a band who had leagued together for almost every crime except that of murder. If such a thing occurred while engaged in our other pursuits it was what we call 'an accident'; and my hands, at least, thank God, were never stained

with blood, without the fulfilment of one of our laws, the punishment of one who was false to us, may be called murder. May Heaven pardon me for it, and yet I was forced to act my part in the horrid drama."

"You have heard how utterly impious the oaths we had to take on becoming members. I shuddered when I first heard them, shuddered every time I listened to their repetition, and shudder now when I only think of them. Men in perdition, never could have conceived anything more utterly horrible."

"Well, I had been a member about a year, sinking constantly deeper in crime, although becoming more expert day by day. At this time our band had become numerous, and our 'profits' (queer word that for theft) consequently large. Men of all professions, lawyers, doctors, even those professing to be ministers, were enrolled among its members. It was, in fact, difficult to enter any town or society without finding many who visited our underground 'castles,' for hidden caves, secret places of meeting beneath the sod and far from sunlight were not uncommon. This much it was necessary for me to say, to have you understand fully the residue of my story. One word more of explanation, and I hasten on my tale of horror; it is this, the master minds were men of education, many of them of refinement, and, need I say, that my parents had fitted me for a far different situation in life?"

"Time passes: my pulse appears to throb more slowly, my heart to beat less warmly, and I hasten on."

"A young man, prepossessing, elegant in manners, men said skilful with a pen and influential in society, joined us, and it was not long after his subscribing the terrible oath that he was chosen secretary, and became one of the guiding spirits. Still, he seemed loath to take any active outside part, though he signed bills, counterfeited signatures; yet he never had been known to pass one. Though he willingly received his share of the proceeds of burglaries and stolen horses, yet he never was known to have participated in any such act of crime. Such things could not long be without suspicion, and as one after another of our members were arrested in a manner that was very mysterious, it began to be whispered about that Egbert Smith (the name by which he was known to us), was a spy."

"That which combined all of guilt known to our laws. Spy and informer! and a horrible death was the verdict from which there could be no appeal."

"On a dark, tempestuous night—night fit for murder (oh, heavens! how that word shivers all my hopes for hereafter into pieces!), I was summoned to attend a meeting at one of our most secluded resorts. The opening to it was amid tangled roots and fallen bogs, on the banks of a river. The opening was very small, but within, nature and art had formed an immense room. It was late when I arrived; the apartment was already quite full of desperadoes. A mask was handed me at the inner door, for two secluded us from the world above. It was a black one, and I knew that the purpose of the meeting was death!"

"How shall I go on? How relate the story of that night of crime? Turn your eyes away from me, angels, and shrink back, devils! I am not yours yet. Take me, if you must, but ah! not yet, not yet!"

It was evident that his mind was fast giving away before terror, and it was with great difficulty that I calmed him sufficiently to proceed. I administered a stimulant that had been left by the physician, and after a brief rest he continued:

"Every one in that dismal cavern—dismal at best and now but feebly lighted—was masked like myself. In silence I took my seat. Before me, in the very centre, and where the light of the lamp and fire fell plainly upon his face, sat Egbert Smith. Abject, terrified, already half-dead, he sat there waiting his doom. It matters not to dwell upon the trial. All was clearly proved, for he had been followed by persons (though members) unknown to him, and had been seen to take rewards for information that brought imprisonment to more than one of his comrades. The trial, therefore, was simply a farce, and even while he begged, prayed for life, called on us in the name of his mother, of God, his doom was thundered in his ears."

"And now the part I have shrunk the most from must be told. Now comes the deep horror of the act, for I was chosen as one of his executioners! Pity me, Heaven! Angels, save me! Tear me from the soul-clutching talons of fiends!"

Again I with difficulty calmed him, and again he, after a pause, proceeded:

"First the hand," commanded our captain—"the false right hand, that signed the pledge of faithful brotherhood!"

"The arm was bared to the elbow; the hand—a fair, white hand, on which glistened a jewelled ring, the gift of a doating mother, was laid upon a block."

"Strike! strike for justice and the brotherhood!"

"I lifted the sharpened hatchet—struck—the hand rolled to the rocky floor—the hot blood spirted in my face—horror! and yet before his very eyes I was

forced to pick it up, blood-dripping as it was, and toss it into the fire, watch it until the sickening fumes rose up and filled the cavern, and answer as calmly as possible that the sentence had been faithfully executed!"

"The tongue that repeated the oath and broke it!" again came the command.

"Other hands than mine, thank Heaven, had that dreadful duty to perform; and well that it was so, for I could never have executed it."

"The jaws were forced open, the tongue, swollen, blackened, and yet calling on Heaven to save him, was rent from the mouth and added to the piecemeal funeral pile! But I grow faint. Next the head was severed from the trunk and placed upon a stake, that all might gaze upon the traitor who had just expiated his doom—had received his punishment. I saw the glaring wide open eyes, the torture-wrung lineaments, the fallen jaw, the grinning teeth, and—"

I had turned away during this dreadful relation, savouring more of a horrible fancy, a fiendish nightmare of the brain, than reality, and as the sounds ceased to pass his lips I turned again, but to see eyes, face, jaw, and teeth as he had just described—to gaze on death."

"Well, that is certainly a dreadful story, Frederick," said his wife, "and I never heard it before."

"Well, Julia tell us yours, and pray do not let it be so terrifying as Frederick's, else you will frighten us all," observed one of her sisters, who had been deeply impressed, not only with the story to which she had just listened, but with the grave, solemn and sonorous voice in which it had been related.

"Have I frightened you then, Mary?" asked Frederick, with a smile.

"No, no, Fred! perhaps not frightened me, but you always delighted in the Mrs. Radcliffe style and make all the blood that's in our bodies tingle, and make our whole flesh move as if it were going to creep off our very bones," replied Mary.

"Well, never mind, I shall be more cheerful," said Mrs. Manvers, the wife of Frederick, "although my story is also of Italy."

THE BRIDE OF THE CARNIVAL.

JULIA'S STORY.

"Does she really love me?" said Captain Ernest Von Steinberg, aide-de-camp to King Louis of Bavaria, as he left the presence of the young and beautiful Baroness Anna Von Graffenberg, the belle of Munich, and his passionately-beloved mistress, "or is she really the heartless coquette which common rumour makes her?"

As he passed down the staircase, he encountered the pretty baroness's pretty French chambermaid, Lisette.

"Lisette, you are looking charmingly to-day—do you know it?"

"My mirror told me so this morning," said the soubrette, looking up boldly into his face.

"What lips! what eyes! and what a figure!" said the soldier. "But do you know I think you would look infinitely prettier in a lavender-coloured silk robe, with cherry-coloured ribbons?"

"Very possible, monsieur," answered the waiting-maid. "But that costs money—and how is a poor girl like me to dress like a lady?"

"I have thought of that difficulty," said Ernest, "and have provided a remedy. Will you allow me to present you with a slight token of my gratitude and admiration?"

As he spoke, he drew forth a little net silk purse, through the interstices of which several newly-coined gold pieces showed their pleasant brilliant countenances. Lisette's eyes reflected their brightness.

"Monsieur is altogether too generous," she said. But the little white fingers clasped the glittering offering, and conveyed it to one of the side pockets of the coquettish black-silk apron that she wore.

"Now tell me, Lisette, is your mistress going to the masked-ball at the palace to-morrow night?"

"Ah, but that is a great secret, monsieur, which I promised madame not to reveal," replied the Parisian, archly, laying her fingers on her lips.

"She is going, then?" said Ernest.

"Monsieur says so," answered the soubrette, smiling.

"And what else did your mistress charge you to keep secret?" asked the officer, smiling in his turn.

"That she was going to wear a rose-coloured domino, with a bunch of sky-blue ribbons on the right shoulder," replied the waiting-maid hurriedly, and she ran up-stairs, as if to avoid further catechism, fully satisfied that her indiscretion had been an ample offset to the aide-de-camp's present.

"Very good, Madame Anna," said the young officer to himself. "I have now reconnoitered the ground, and I shall know where to open my trenches. All's

fair in love and war. And now to my friend the sculptor's—if his ingenuity aid me, my success will be certain."

On the night of the masked ball, the royal palace of Munich was a blaze of light. Every window glowed as if the interior were a mass of fire, and the brilliant rays, streaming forth upon the night, fell on the glittering helmets, breastplates and sabres of the mounted cuirassiers, or were reflected from the bayonets of a detachment of the infantry of the line drawn up as a guard of honour in the square without. Chamberlains stood at the entrance of the palace, and files of lackeys, with wax-tapers flaring in the evening air, shed almost the light of day on the grand staircase. Carriage after carriage rolled up in succession, with their living freights of beauty and youth, and as light feet fell like snow-flakes on the carpeted marble, as graceful forms vanished within the portals, the ears of the bystanders were lulled by the pleasant rustling of silks, while the breeze was perfumed by a thousand delicate odours.

But if such were the external manifestations of the fête, how far more brilliant and bewildering was the interior of the palace of pleasure. How those lofty halls glowed with the dazzling effulgence of thousands of wax-tapers! How softly beautiful were the marble statues that graced the niches, lined the corridors, and looked down from their pedestals on the grand ball-room! How oriental in their magnificence were the gorgeous draperies of velvet and satin, with fringes of gold bullion; but above all, what music streamed on the enchanted air from an orchestra composed of a hundred of the best instrumentalists in the city. And the life—the animation of the throngs that filled that brilliant saloon—who shall describe it?

Ernest Von Steinberg, who looked but for one person in that brilliant multitude, was so masked and muffled that his disguise was perfectly impenetrable. Therefore, when he found the rose-coloured domino at last, he hesitated not to address her.

"Good evening, fair mask."

"Good evening, gallant cavalier. But how know you that I am fair?"

"Were I to pronounce you the fairest in Munich, none would dispute your title."

"Do you know me?"

"The belle of Munich hides her face in vain," answered Ernest. "That inimitable foot and hand are her betrayors."

"You may be mistaken, after all."

"I cannot be, and I claim the hand," said Ernest, "and will find employment for that dainty foot. The music sounds."

"I believe my hand is promised already," answered the fair one, "so take it quick, before some one disputes the prize with you."

The next moment they were whirling round the vast saloon to music that might keep dancers on their feet for life. Anna leaned upon the shoulder of her partner, and he breathed in her ear words that she could not listen to without a thrill of pleasure. At the conclusion of the dance, Ernest led her into a side room, in which they found themselves quite alone.

"You persist, then," said the lady, "in calling me the Baroness Von Grafenberg?"

"If I had doubted before, your dancing would have convinced me. The leader of the sylphides is known by her step."

"I am a perfect Taglioni, then!" said the baroness, laughing. "Well, mein herr, you have guessed right. And now, in return for my confidence, may I request you to raise your mask?"

"I can refuse you nothing," said Ernest Von Steinberg.

He raised his mask as he spoke, and disclosed to the astonished eyes of the baroness the well-known features of King Louis of Bavaria.

"But I thought you assured us that the cavalier was Captain Ernest Von Steinberg!" exclaimed the reader. Let us explain. To give additional zest and pleasure, and complicate the mysteries of masquerade, the courtiers of Louis XIV. of France had invented the following expedient. They procured fine wax likenesses of their friends, of eminent persons, and wore them under their masks. When requested to declare their identity, they would raise the outer mask, and the inner wax one, seen for a moment, in most cases completely deceived the spectator. It is easy to imagine what an infinite field for mystification this contrivance afforded. Captain Ernest had a friend, a sculptor, who had modelled a bust of the king. And from him he had procured a wax mask, beautifully coloured, and so well executed as to deceive the eyes of the baroness for the moment they rested on it. Ernest, satisfied with his success, replaced his black velvet vizard, and continued the interview.

"Yes, baroness," whispered the disguised aide-de-camp, "it is Louis who stands before you—not as your king—but as your subject, your slave—the thrall of your beauty."

"Ah, sire!" replied the belle of Munich, "you are sporting with the sensibilities of a weak woman." "No, by Heaven!" replied the false king. "I am incapable of that. Behold me at your feet, and hear me swear eternal allegiance to your charms."

"Rise, rise, sire!" said the baroness, very much agitated. "We may be seen or overheard."

"Long have I thought," continued the false king, "that beauty such as yours should grace a throne."

"A throne!" echoed the baroness.

"But you are right," he continued, hurriedly. "This is no time or place for confidence like ours. Hark, the clock is striking twelve. Will you trust my honour, and meet me at this hour to-morrow night?"

"Where, sire?"

"In the Chinese pavilion in the garden of the palace. The wicket of the postern gate that leads to the door of the pavilion shall be left open for you."

The baroness gave him her hand. "To-morrow night at twelve!" said she, and glided from the room.

"Oh, woman! woman! woman!" said Ernest, when left alone—"false as fair! Is it for this we rank you with the angels? But tremble, faithless one—your punishment shall be as bitter as the agony I suffer."

And he followed the baroness into the dancing-saloon. He had no sooner left the room, than a masked figure stole forth from beneath a mass of crimson drapery.

"The Chinese pavilion—to-morrow night at twelve!" said the stranger. "Bravo! bravo! Captain Von Steinberg!"

And he, too, vanished.

A few minutes before twelve o'clock on the following night, Captain Von Steinberg, wearing his wax mask, unlocked and entered the Chinese pavilion in the royal garden. The inside shutters of the windows were closed, so that he ventured to produce a match and light a wax-taper, taking care to place a shade over it so that the room should be very dimly lighted. After completing these arrangements, he glanced round, and started on seeing the figure of a man near the table. The stranger was dressed in the uniform of an aide-de-camp, and wore a mask upon his face.

"Who are you?" demanded Ernest, advancing to the intruder.

"You have anticipated a similar question," replied the mask.

"But I have a right to know," said Ernest.

"So have I," was the quiet answer.

"Sir," said Ernest, placing his hand on the hilt of his sabre, "I wear a sword."

"So do I," replied the mask; "but I reserve it for the enemies of my country."

"Who are you? I implore you to tell me!" said Ernest.

"Ah, now you speak in a different manner. I, sir, am Captain Von Steinberg, at your service, aide-de-camp to his Majesty, King of Bavaria."

"The deuce you are!" thought Ernest.

"But confidence for confidence," said the impostor.

"Now you must tell me who you are, and by what right I find you in the royal pavilion at this hour."

"By the very best right in the world," replied Ernest boldly. "I, sir, am King Louis of Bavaria; and he raised his outward mask, displaying the features of the king."

"Pardon me, sire," said the stranger, falling on his knees; "but, making my rounds in the garden, I found the postern gate unlocked, and fearing treachery to your royal person, deemed it my duty to keep watch in the pavilion, of which, as your Majesty is aware, I have a duplicate key."

"Zounds, man! you haven't looked the postern, have you?" asked the pretended king.

"No, sire, it remains as I found it."

"Then, my good fellow, there is no harm done," said Ernest. "And I'll tell you a secret; I expect a lady here every instant, who has accorded me a private interview. The best service you can render me—is to leave me to myself."

"A hint from your royal lips is a command," said the pretended Ernest. "That your Majesty's suit may prosper is the warmest wish of your most devoted subject."

The stranger vanished. Before Ernest had an opportunity to frame any hypothesis with regard to this mysterious being, the door opened cautiously and admitted the baroness. She threw herself at once at the feet of Ernest.

"Rise, lady!" said the pretended monarch. "I should rather be at your feet—rise!"

"Not," said the baroness, "till your Majesty pledges your royal word to pardon me in advance for whatever I may confess."

"I freely pledge you that," said Ernest, aiding the lady to rise.

"Know, then," said the baroness, "that I am an ungrateful woman. Your Majesty distinguished me last

night, and held out hopes so brilliant that a subject might well be dazzled by their promise. I was dazzled, and I heard you with pleasure. But it was only a momentary weakness. In the delirium of the dance you told me that you loved me—my consent to meet you here seemed a confession of reciprocal affection. But, in truth, my heart is given to another. I love—and love with all the fervour of my being—not a monarch, but a subject."

"A rival!" said the pretended king, sternly. "His name?"

"Promise that you will not harm him, sire."

"I make no promise in such a case as this."

"Then I shall keep my secret," said the baroness, firmly.

"And you will love this man—even if I command you to tear his image from your heart?"

"I love him, and him only," said the baroness. "In good report and evil report—in sorrow and sickness—in shame and honour. Truly I pledged my hand—my heart went with it. I am his for ever."

"And he is thine, dear Anna!" said Ernest, tearing off his disguise. "Will you forgive the trial I have subjected you to?"

"Will you forgive the weakness of a moment that made me listen to temptation?"

"Freely and fully," said Ernest, folding the baroness in his arms. "And now—when shall we be married?"

"To-night!" said a voice beside them. And there stood the King of Bavaria, but still in the uniform of an aide-de-camp in which he had entered the pavilion that evening and first encountered Ernest. He it was who had overheard the appointment at the masquerade. "To-night," he repeated, smiling on his astonished auditors. "The chapel is lighted up—the priests are in waiting—the wedding guests are there and the wedding feast prepared. Louis of Bavaria awaits to conduct you to the altar, and to give away the bride. And may the pleasures of this carnival be but the precursors of a life of joy!"

The delight of the lovers—the joy of Lisette—the surprise and pleasure of all their family, must be left to the imagination.

"Well, now I'll tell you a story," cried George, the heir-apparent of Royston Hall, "and it is that which I have just heard from sister Julia that has brought it up in my mind."

"You tell a story!" said Mary, in ridicule. "You'll tell us some nonsense or other that nobody will be able to make either head or tail of."

"Well," returned George, "I can but try. However, what I am going to tell, was told to me by Orville Wharton, of whom you have often heard me speak, and who was my *cade mecum*, my constant companion, until he took the melancholies and lost the balance of his mind."

"Never mind that, George," said his brother-in-law, Frederick, "let us hear it."

"Yes, yes; let us hear it," said Mary, "since it is not a tale of your own making."

It is said that Cato, the Roman censor, reprehended more by a look than by words, and George, on this occasion, glanced at Mary in such a manner as to make her feel that she had contemned the abilities of her brother before the present company with more freedom than discretion. George, however, said nothing, as he felt that he would, perhaps, have a chance of paying her out in her own coin before the night was out. He, therefore, began.

A BACHELOR'S CONFESSION.

GEORGE'S STORY.

It was a dreamy, melancholy day in October, when Orville and I were walking arm-in-arm through a beautiful grove, where the loveliness of the prospect and soothing quietude of the atmosphere had dispelled all our heart-secretness, and we were chatting away in mutually confidential talk.

Orville Wharton possessed one of those locked-up hearts which seldom confides its secrets to another. He could hardly be said to have a confidential friend; and yet, in some of his mellowest moods, it was not impossible to draw from him a confession of his heart's experiences. It was not because he was cold-hearted or proud that he kept such secrets to himself; but his common-sense had taught him that those experiences which were too sacred to be made the common talk of the whole neighbourhood, were safest when known to himself alone. Hence, though we had long been friends, I had known nothing of his *affaires d'amour* until the day above mentioned.

"Wharton," said I, with the greatest nonchalance imaginable, as we approached a very retired corner of the grove, "you never yet explained to me why your enjoyment of life never became so great as that you should find it necessary to take in a partner?"

"No, nor to any one else have I explained it," said

he, in a way that satisfied me he did not consider me over much inquisitive.

I was encouraged by his manner, and resolved to press the matter farther.

"New I am in want of material for a story, and if any passages in your life's history are sufficiently tender or thrilling to be of any interest, you will please reel them off, and I will take notes that not a word be lost."

He smiled at this rally, rather soberly, however, and bade me be seated, when he commenced as follows:

"I could a tale unfold, whose lightest word
Would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young blood
Make thy two eyes, like stars, start from their spheres;

but 'twould not be my own. 'Twas real, though, and I'll tell it some time, so that you can have it for your story. But I suppose you are more anxious now to hear about my own experience, however unromantic, than about any one's else, though he be a hero."

I assented to this, placing myself in a listening attitude, while he continued:

"More than once during my teens have I thought myself the victim of Cupid's piercing darts; more than once did I think myself enamoured of some fair Venus, too rarely beautiful and glorious to belong to the race of mortals.

One in particular, Carrie Lee, (I think you used to know her) was the object of my most assiduous attentions at the age of fourteen. Her dark, laughing eyes, and hair black as night, were fascinating surely; and I am not at all certain but I should have continued to adore her, and perhaps eventually have solicited her hand (her heart I thought was mine) had it not been for a peculiar circumstance that just then turned the current of my thoughts.

One rainy day my father sent me to a neighbour's house, Mr. Lee's; and as it chanced to rain much harder than it had been doing as I approached Carrie's home, I thought it a good excuse for stopping awhile. But I had no more than entered the yard gate when I heard the well-known voice of my supposed angel talking to her mother in a very excited and angry tone:

"I won't wear it! If I can't have a new one I won't go to church at all! There's Nancy Highsail has new bonnets just as often as she pleases; and if I can't have one now I'll never go —"

"Here I thought I could go. It was enough! The spell was broken. I never thought she looked pretty after that. And though she wore one of the neatest of new bonnets to church the next Sabbath, I thought almost any of the other girls fairer than she.

"These happy days of childhood have long since passed; and the memory of them oft steals into our hearts like the sweet remembrance of a dream, or like the memory of home and friends to the lone mariner when far at sea. None of my youthful disappointments left a scar upon my heart. Unscathed I outlived them all.

"But if this were all, I should have no occasion for sorrow. The saddest is yet to be told. I would not lip a word of it, but that you are my friend, and we have been intimate so long I wonder I have never told you before. It is not because I have lacked confidence in you; but every one, who has had experience, knows the wounded heart opens not easily to let its secrets out.

"In 1850, you remember, I went to Brighton. Upon my first arrival there, I was directed to an hotel, of which a widow lady was the proprietress. It was there I first met with the beautiful and accomplished Miss La Duke; for she was beautiful. Heaven had showered upon her all the personal charms that any heart could desire; and her parents had taken all possible pains to make her an accomplished belle, sadly to the neglect of those moral virtues which are woman's greatest ornament. She had just returned from a very popular seminary, with her head full of romance and a desire for adventure, or anything to make life lively. Being a very intimate friend of the lady's daughter, who had been with her a part of the time at the seminary, she was there for an evening's visit the night after her return, which chanced to be the evening of my arrival.

"She was endowed with a fine talent for music, of which I am especially fond; and thus my admiration was gained the moment she began to sing. Her voice was very rich, and the sweetest I ever heard. Her conversation was also refined and elegant.

"We were soon acquainted; and when I accompanied her home that evening, she very politely requested me to walk in and see her parents, which I was not loath to do, as that would give me an opportunity to see her home. Mr. and Mrs. La Duke were pleasant, sociable people, and ere I bade them 'good evening,' I felt considerably well acquainted. I remember feeling uncommonly light-hearted as I returned to the hotel. Possibly the mother's invitation to come and see them may have caused this. At

all events I accepted the invitation and became a frequent visitor.

"My visits were received with evident pleasure, and it was a little surprising to myself to receive such cordial greetings. I little dreamed, then, how strongly I was becoming attached to the fair Miss La Duke. I remember I thought her home of the pleasantest kind, I thought her house plants uncommonly beautiful, and her canary's song sweeter than any other's. I thought, also, the lectures and concerts which I attended with her much better than any that I attended accompanied by any one else. But I did not then imagine that Melissa (for that was her name) was anything more to me than a friend; that any tie stronger than friendship had attracted me to her home so often. Alas! so little do we know of ourselves. I had even heard that she was engaged to another; but that report troubled me not. I hardly thought it possible that such could be the fact. Indeed, I did not take the trouble to ascertain whether it was true or not, so little did I think it concerned me. I went with her occasionally to evening parties, and sometimes to public entertainments, literary and musical.

"Thus time passed on, and it was necessary for me to return to the college where I had entered as junior the summer before. The evening previous to my departure for Oxford I spent at Mr. La Duke's; and it was not till I came to bid Melissa farewell that I had the least idea how dear she was to me, or that my heart's affections were at all awakened. But when I received her farewell kiss, a strange fluttering about the heart admonished me that

"Love is a singing bird
That flutters everywhere;
His music in our souls is heard,
Charming us unaware.

Perhaps, I thought, Cupid had then been making an assault upon my heart; but I thought to forget it soon; and, hurrying away, I strove to busy my thoughts with the surrounding scenes, and the duties to which I was hastening.

"Immediately upon my arrival at the college I joined the classes and plunged into my books, thinking thus to drown all remembrance of the fair one whom I had left behind. What a delusive idea! What folly thus to think of smothering the passion that had seized upon and filled my very soul! I need not say it was all in vain. Melissa was the subject of my dreams by night and reveries by day. I saw her name on everything I gazed upon; I heard it in every sound. I would study till the page became blurred, and I could see nothing but 'Melissa' inscribed in great capitals all over the book.

Thus love stormed the fortress of my heart for two months, till at length I surrendered. Yes, I determined to write to 'my beloved,' and request permission to correspond with her.

"She replied in her own elegant style, not quite declining to hold such correspondence, but suggesting that it might not be best, all things considered, and signed herself, 'Your friend Lissa.'

"I thought it rather cool, and hesitated for some time about writing again; but you know 'Love is blind,' and dashes on without reason. Accordingly, with the assurance that hope ever gives to those upon whom she deigns to smile, I decided to write once again, and open the recesses of my heart, declaring my love and soliciting hers in return. My letter read:

"DEAR MELISSA,—A passion, strong as life, has grown within my heart, and it is that I might call you mine. That desire has wrought itself into verses; for have you not heard that Love and Poesy are twin sisters? Dearest, will you not accept the following as the language of a true and sincere heart?

A youth once sailing down a stream
Espied a flower in beauty blown,
Fair as a queen upon her throne;
Beheld the flower with high esteem,
And, sighing, wished it for his own.

That stream was life, and I the youth;
While sailing onward, lo! appeared
That beautiful flower, my soul that cheered;
Be not surprised, 'tis nought but truth—
Thou art the flower to me endeared.

Long have I loved thee, dearest one;
Oh! have I loved thee thus in vain?
Oh! wilt thou not, my fairy, deign
To cheer the heart which thou hast won,
And with Love's sceptre reign?

Oh! spurn not now my humble rhyme,
Though rough its language doth appear;
Receive it as the truth sincere,
Although not clothed in words sublime;
And say, wilt thou be mine, my dear?

Nor wealth nor worldly fame I ask;
For wealth is but a gilded toy,
And fame my soul would quickly cloy;
If I but in thy smiles can bask,
That, that would brim my soul with joy.

Nor worldly honours do I seek;
But love alone, that gem divine,
Which doth Heaven's beauties all combine;
One word if thy fond lips will speak,
A crown of joy and love is mine.

"Would I could ever be yours and yours only."
"ORVILLE WHARTON."

"It was two long weeks before she replied. Oh! what weeks of suspense they were to me! You can little imagine how, during those weeks, I wavered between doubt, hope and fear! I thought anything would be better than such suspense. But oh! 'twas bliss compared with the disappointment that followed; for night and darkness, aye, a fearful darkness, fell upon my soul, that well-nigh crushed out life. It was that which brought on the dreadful attack of brain fever that so nearly deprived me of reason, and even of life, the summer before we became acquainted. You have heard me speak of it?"

"Yes," said I, "but you never told me before what occasioned it. But are you not going to tell me what she wrote in reply?"

"Oh, yes! I would let you see it if I had not, in my agony, flung it to the flames. But every word is so burned into my brain that I can never, never forget it. 'Twas this:

"MY DEAR SIR ORVILLE,—Rather late in the day this for one to make his declaration who was wooing all last winter; and especially since my wedding-day is appointed and the preparations made. Indeed, Sir Orville, you are quite condescending to address your verses to me, when you might just as well have written to the moon, or those other glittering orbs—the jewels set in night's crown. May the stars have compassion on you! Accept my thanks for the honour you intended me, and my hearty wish that you may find some one more worthy of your song than your friend,
"LISSA."

"She little thought how like sharp daggers those words would pierce my heart. She little thought how cruel they were; for she would not have written thus if she had taken a serious thought about it."

"But was she ever married?" inquired I, as Wharton hesitated a moment, seemingly in deep thought.

"Certainly! After she wrote she eloped with a gambler, who had ingratiated himself into her favour."

"There, now!" cried Mary, "I knew that George would end with something disagreeable of the ladies. He always does that sort of thing, and I think he'll die an old bachelor himself!"

"Well, if I do, it won't be for any melancholy I shall feel on account of the sex, I'm sure," returned George.

"Come, George, let the sex alone, and remember that your own mother was one of them," interposed the squire, and calling upon the housekeeper, Mrs. Jones, to contribute her mite to the entertainment of the evening, she without hesitation commenced—

THE GIPSY FORTUNE-TELLER.

MRS. JONES'S STORY.

It was a silver wedding. All the old and young people, within many miles of Brookfield, were gathered in the spacious parlours of Mr. Mortimer, who, with his still comely wife on his arm, was receiving the congratulations of friends, as he had twenty-five years before, dearer to each other now than then, since every grey hair told of troubles and years borne together. They listened with affectionate satisfaction to the kind wishes and benedictions showered upon them from the many friends who had gathered to honour the anniversary.

The cake had been cut and distributed; the dry remnants of the first wedding-cake disposed of, with much merriment; when there was a slight bustle at the door, and a young, fine-looking man hastily entered, and made his way to the host and hostess. His cheek was flushed, and his dress travel-stained, showing evidence of haste; but his whole appearance was prepossessing in the extreme.

"I was fearful of being too late. Dear father, dear mother, accept my heartfelt congratulations, and may I preside at your golden wedding also?"

To Mr. Mortimer he gave his hand respectfully, but he flung the other arm around his mother's neck in a fervent embrace.

"I am very glad to see you, Henry," she said, returning his embrace, fondly. "It spoiled half the pleasure of this hour having you absent."

"I almost despaired of obtaining a furlough, but at the last moment I was permitted absence for two days. I am very glad to see you, mother."

She did not doubt it; she held too many proofs of his devoted affection for her, and there were those at that moment watching him who envied the mother such a son.

"He just worships her," said one lady to another, who stood near. "It is well he is an only son."

"And well he may worship her," was the reply, "for she has been an angel of goodness to him. I see you don't know the story. Come, I am a friend of the family, and don't mind telling you."

"It is now thirty years since Mrs. Mortimer and I were girls together. Grace Stanley she was then, the loveliest and wildest girl in all the country round, possessing more lovers than any maiden she knew, yet disdaining them all. We supposed that some day the right one would come and carry her off; but there seemed no sudden likelihood of it, when one evening, at a merry-making to close May-day, a gipsy-woman made her appearance, who professed to tell fortunes at a shilling each. She was a fine-looking woman, quite unlike the usual tramps of that character and profession, and though middle-aged, with remarkably handsome eyes and hair, both coal black."

"When it came my turn, I proposed Grace, and one of the girls went to find her. She soon came, laughing and flushed with running, and looking remarkably beautiful."

"The gipsy looked at her attentively, and muttered a few words; then she took the delicate hand and perused its rosy palm. A dark frown ruffled her dusky brow, and Grace laughed merrily at her evident perturbation."

"I thought I could puzzle you," she said, gaily. "You can't find a lover for me."

"The gipsy did not heed her, but went on muttering:

"He is on the water—coming right here. Then he has left her. His hand is black—so is his heart. He will be here in a week. In four you will be his wife. You will have a gay wedding, but there will be trouble after it. Your path is crossed."

"She dropped the hand hastily, pulled the scarlet hood over her face, and taking her staff, walked away, while the spell was yet on us."

"I was the first to recover."

"No, Miss Grace, you are to be married in a month! We will all dance at the wedding. You have given us short notice," I said, laughing.

"But for once Grace was in no humour for badinage, and her manner was quite subdued the rest of the evening."

"It was a week before I saw her again, when I called at her father's house, and to my astonishment met a stranger—a tall, dark-haired man, who had the day previously arrived from —. In a moment I thought of the gipsy's prophecy; but Grace gave me no chance to allude to it, and I soon after forgot it."

"I did not think of it again till I was fastening the flowers in her hair the morning she became a bride. Then I recalled the conversation, and we both noted how entirely the prophecy had been fulfilled."

"I never saw any one more infatuated than Grace was with her lover; nor did I see any reason why he should not deserve her love. He was eminently handsome, and his mental and moral qualities seemed of a high order. He had brought letters of recommendation from Mr. Stanley's friends, and his necessary return there seemed to excuse the haste in the marriage."

"Grace returned with her husband to his own home, and it was many years before I saw her again, and heard from her own lips the account of her life there. I will tell you just as she afterwards told me. We have never alluded to it since."

"After a very delightful honeymoon, spent in travel and visiting his friends, the young couple settled down in elegant style to housekeeping, with a fine establishment of servants; for Mr. Mortimer was wealthy, and lavished his means upon everything that pertained to the comfort of his young wife. And Grace found everything in her new life to make it a delightful one."

"One day, when no visitors were present, she was engaged in writing home a glowing account of her happiness, when, through the open door, she heard the voice of a woman in altercation with the housekeeper, who was remonstrating in a lower key."

"I tell you, I will see madam herself," were the words which greeted her; "so just let me pass."

"Grace went down into the hall, supposing it to be some unfortunate beggar. A tall, bold-looking young woman, with very red lips and cheeks, stood there defiantly, holding by the hand a baby-boy of two or three years, a child of remarkable beauty."

"What can I do for you?" asked Grace, in her gentlest tone, not at all understanding the scene, while the housekeeper looked distressed, and tried to awe the intruder into silence. "Do you want any assistance from me?"

"Yes, ma'am," said the woman, defiantly, while her great black eyes fastened themselves upon poor Grace's face. "I want you to take the child."

"Want me to take it?" said Grace, in surprise. "It is a beautiful child. What is his name?"

"Henry Mortimer, ma'am!" was the insolent reply.

"Why, that is my husband's name," said Grace, in innocent surprise.

"And he is your husband's child, ma'am," said the woman, drawing him forward. "You can see for yourself."

"Poor Grace! She stood like a statue as the dreadful truth dawned upon her that she had been cruelly deceived by him she had loved and honoured so, but whom she almost felt as if she could never love or honour again. The ghost of her lost happiness rose before her as she stood, with whitening lips and aching heart, before this disturber of her peace. The woman turned to go."

"I shall leave him here," she said.

"Then Grace saw that the unnatural red was hectic, and that the form was wasted by disease. A strange pity sprang up in her heart; perhaps it was for her to undo the wrong her husband had done."

"I will take your child," she said, gently; "and, God helping me, I will be a mother to it. I will make this reparation for the great wrong that has been done you."

"A new light flashed into the large black eyes of the woman. 'I shan't trouble anybody long,' she said."

"When Mr. Mortimer returned from the brief journey he had taken, he found in his home a beautiful child, dressed in wondrous baby fashion, who called his young wife 'mamma.'"

"Of the explanation which took place between the husband and wife, none ever knew; but from that time till now, Henry was the child of both."

"From that moment it seemed as if Mr. Mortimer worshipped his wife as something beyond common ken, and this feeling he imparted to the child; and if Grace suffered as only woman can suffer from such things, she made two hearts supremely happy."

"It was a singular coincidence that the erring mother of the only child was the gipsy fortune-teller."

"When Henry Mortimer was coming into manhood, he bid fair to verify the character of his gipsy parent, and become an outcast from home and society, when the commands of his father, and the tears and prayers of his mother seemed to fail."

"Mr. Mortimer went to him one day and revealed his hitherto unknown history, beseeching him, for the sake of the mother who had done so much for him, to return to the path of rectitude. Not in vain did he appeal to the generous-hearted boy. After a few brief lapses into temptation, he became a noble man, such as you see him to-night. Do you wonder that he loves his mother?"

"I am quite sure that Grace has never for a moment since regretted her choice, in spite of the trouble so singularly foretold by 'The Gipsy Fortune-teller.'"

"It is my turn now, I suppose?" said Mary. "Your turn!" re-echoed George, "what can you tell? Let Biddy, there, give us something from Ireland."

This was applied to a finely-grown young woman, rolling in milky softness, with a fair skin, blue eyes, dark hair and blue red cheeks, as round as the potatoes upon which, from childhood upwards, she had been nourished."

"Och! I can tell no stories!" exclaimed Biddy.

"Oh! yes you can!" ejaculated several young voices, "for we have heard ye."

"Get away wid yez," said Biddy, laughing and blushing perfect scarlet; "Get away wid yez. I never told a story uv my own makin' i' all my loife. I have told ye some o' my mother's, rest her soul, but never any uv my own."

"Well, tell us one of your mother's," asked George.

"Och! let Miss Mary tell hers furst, and then may be I'll try!" said Biddy, which was quite satisfactory to all the company, but more especially to the younger members, who entertained a warm affection for Biddy."

Mary, notwithstanding the slightly expressed and implied contempt of her brother George, who felt that he had paid her out, now began—

LETTICE WYNNE'S TRIAL.

MARY'S STORY.

"You'll never die an old maid, my pretty lady! But there's trouble coming on you, my pretty!" pursued the old dame, bending her wrinkled face until it nearly touched the velvet-white hand. "A dark, dark trouble—and it's not far off, neither—it's written as plain as if—"

"Nonsense!" ejaculated Lettice, drawing away her hand with a slight shudder. "I don't want to hear any more of my fortune told—it's getting too absurd. Send her away, Mr. Vail, it makes me nervous!"

She tossed back the lovely shower of glossy golden curls, as if relieved to be rid of the matter, while Dudley Vail dismissed the scarlet-cloaked beldame with a gratuity that sent her rejoicing down the steep, romantic path that led to the beach below."

Vail threw himself lightly on the grass at the young

beauty's feet, while Ralph Seymour leaned with folded arms, and dark, contracted brow, against the gnarled trunk of a gigantic old oak. All day long he had been the sport of Lettice Wynne's coquettish humour and contradictory fancies, and now, heartsick and angry, he saw those smiles lavished on his rival, for one beam of which he would have given his own right hand."

"My scarf?" said Lettice, suddenly looking around. "Oh! there it hangs, just where those vines droop over the cliff. Pray, don't trouble yourself, Mr. Vail, Ralph will get it for me."

Both gentlemen sprang at the instant. Mercy Greig looked at Lettice with eyes of grave reproach.

"Lettice! how can you torment those poor fellows so cruelly? You are a heartless coquette! It would serve you right to die an old maid."

"Didn't you hear what my shrivelled old propheteess foretold, that no such awful fate was in store for me?"

"Hush!" ejaculated Mercy, holding up her finger in a listening attitude."

For Ralph Seymour, light and agile as a wild deer, had stooped over the dizzy cliff, and disengaged the scarf from the bushes where it had been lodged by the September winds, and stood looking scornfully triumphant at Vail, whose brow was purple with suppressed anger."

"Give that scarf to me!" he said in hoarse, stifled accents. "No hand but mine shall restore it to Lettice."

"We'll see about that," was the calm, contemptuous reply."

Vail sprang forward to wrest the light trophy from the other's hand; at the same instant Seymour stepped back a pace. There was a crash, a rustle of tearing vines; the treacherous cliff gave way beneath the unwanted weight; and Seymour fell, still grasping the frail, fluttering scarf—fell, down that dizzy height, with the hungry sea yawning underneath."

Vail clasped his hands over his eyes with a faint cry, as if to shut out the sick horror of his rival's white, set face, and Lettice, uttering a wild, shriek, that rang through the woods with awful distinctness, fell fainting to the ground."

"I have killed him! I have killed him—and I would have given my own life for his."

Sometimes a single moment of the soul's agony turns a current of being from its warbling flow of sunshine to silence and darkness, lurking beneath life's saddest shades—so it was with Lettice Wynne."

"You are determined not to marry Mr. Gardiner, Lettice? Child, you'll certainly be an old maid!"

"Hush, Mercy! There was but one man whom I could ever have called husband, and he is gone where there is neither marrying, nor giving in marriage."

"But, Lettice, that happened so long ago—ten years this September, and —"

She felt Lettice's forehead grow cold as marble against her cheek; she felt the chill dew on the trembling hand that was laid upon her lips."

"Don't, Mercy! I cannot, cannot bear it."

And Mercy crept away, awed and silent at the heart-break which she had no spell to soothe; while Lettice wept passionately on, into the stormy twilight and the starless night, with wailing winds sighing at the casement, and gusts of autumn rain sweeping wildly by. Yes, she had learned life's hardest lesson—to suffer and endure—and after a while she rose up quietly, drew the crimson curtain, and stirred the fire into a bright, cheery blaze that flickered softly over the rippling golden hair that had not yet lost its gloss, and the pale, lovely cheek, once touched with peachy bloom."

An old maid! Yes, she was indeed an old maid; she, who had been the belle and beauty of all the country around! Yet, was it not meet and fitting that she should drink to the bitter dregs the cup her hand had filled? What was love to her, but an empty name, since the cruel blue waves had swept Ralph Seymour's lifeless corpse away upon their sparkling ridges of foam?"

"Yes sir, Miss Wynne is at home," said the cautious old servant. "Did you wish to see her?"

"Tell her," returned the slow, strangely modulated voice, "that I have come to bring her news of an old friend whom she has long believed dead; tell her —"

But at that moment Miss Wynne opened the door and motioned the stranger to enter."

Tall, dark and silent, he stood before her in the uncertain firelight."

"You are Miss Wynne?"

"I am."

I bring you tidings of him you fancied dead—of Ralph Seymour."

She grew deathly white, and grasped convulsively at the back of a chair."

"He is not dead; floating senseless upon the sea, he was rescued by the boats of an outward bound vessel

and for years he has dwelt under the palm-groves of the East. Do you ask why he did not return? What had he to gain, to hope for? Faint rumours floating towards those orient shores reached him of the engagement—the probable marriage of the woman he had loved. Was it so?

"False—false!" gasped Lettice, with one fluttering hand upon her heart.

He slightly inclined his head.

"You will return to him?" she asked, wildly.

"Yes."

"Then tell him that Lettice Wynne cherished his dead memory with everlasting love; that she was true to him through good and evil. Tell him she loved him; that will be the truest word!"

The stranger paused; she could see the flash of his dark eye, even in that uncertain light.

"She loved him?" he echoed.

Lettice stood, white and silent—was it a dream?

"Lettice—my Lettice!"

Close, close against his strong, true heart—no more sick memories and rains of anguished tears—no more doubts and misunderstandings, and bitter trials. Ten years—ten sad, slow years—it seemed but a moment now in the glow of their exceeding great joy.

Lettice Wynne did not die an old maid, after all, although she richly deserved it. We don't always get our deserts in this world—and what a lucky thing that is for some of us!

A story from Biddy was now demanded.

"Well," said Biddy, with a sigh, "as it may be the last I shall tell on this side the great waters, there need therefore, be no work made about it. It's a true story I'm going to tell, for all that," she observed.

"All the better, Biddy," and she began:

A TRUE GHOST STORY.

BIDDY'S STORY.

ONE Christmas Eve a mistress uv mine put on a large apron and went down to the kitchen to prepare a plum-pudding for next day's dinner. The children, instead of being

Needled all sang in their bed,
While visions of sugar-plums danced through
their heads,

crowded eagerly about her, begging that they might be allowed to sit up an hour longer, "just this once," and help me to pit the raisins.

"We'll be so good!" pleaded Johnny, the youngest son.

"And I can do them so nicely with my new knife!" said Tom.

"I'm not sleepy one bit, mother!" urged Kitty, looking up with wide eyes.

"Nor I either! Oh, do let us sit up, mamma!" put in little Minnie, adding, "I've never seen a plum-pudding made in all me whole life!"

This settled the matter; for Miss Minnie was nearly six years old, and her pitiable case required attending to at once. Permission being granted, the children gave vent to shouts of joy that brought Aunt Mary into the kitchen.

"Hurrah! Hurrah for the pudding! Hurrah for mother! Hurrah for Aunt Ma!"

Aunt Mary laughed her pleasant little laugh and held up her finger.

"Hush! you'll frighten Santa Claus's reindeers so they'll run away with him, and we won't get any toys to-night," said she.

"Humph!" exclaimed Tom, drawing himself up with dignity; "we don't believe a word about Santa Claus. We know better than that."

"Yes," chimed in Kitty; "we believe in the Christ-Child; there isn't any such man as Santa Claus. Grandpa says he has left the country in disgust, because the children have taken such a fancy to Christmas-trees."

"Shure thin," said I, as I was preparing the bowls and dishes for the pudding ceremonials, "an' what'll be the good uv hangin' yer stockin's on the tree, if Santa Claus is after quittin' yez all?"

"Ha! ha!" laughed all the little ones. "Stockings on the Christmas-tree! Oh, Biddy!"

Order being finally restored, the "pitting" and "stemming" commenced in good earnest; and, as a consequence, in the course of three minutes Tom had cut his finger; Minnie had spilled her cup of raisins on the floor, and all had their hands well besmeared, and their mouths full.

"Och, mum!" said I, "where's the use? The children's fairly stuck together with the muck, and the flour's intirely spilt on me after all me scrubbin'." And I despairingly threw myself into a chair by the range.

Anxious to make friends with me, so that they might not be sent to bed at once, the children crowded around me, and Tom, acting as spokesman, begged

me tell them about Mrs. Maloney's pig, or something funny.

"Oh, yes! do, do!" echoed all the rest, half-smothering me with embraces.

"Och! Is it to tell a funny story on Christmas Eve, now? Go 'long wid yez! Who ever heard of such a thing? It's the horrible kind, all about the ghosts and goblins, that belongs to Christmas, and they'd skeer the wits out of yez."

"Pooh!" said Tom. "I'd like to hear the story that could frighten me!"

"Would ye, now?" asked I, with a wicked twinkle. "Figs, indade! I could tell yez something about Mrs. Maloney, now, that 'ud stand ivery one uv yer hairs on end."

"Well, tell us!" cried the children, crowding more closely about me, all but Tom, who stood at the other end of the hearth, feeling very brave, indeed.

"Pshaw!" he muttered, "you might scare the girls, Biddy, but you couldn't scare me, never mind what you told us."

"Well," I began, lowering me voice mysteriously, "yez must know that before Mrs. Maloney came to this country, she had a mighty hard quarrel, indade, with one of her payple. Did yez ever min' now, a quare scar on the forehead of her?"

"Yes," whispered the children, all but Minnie, who was becoming rather sleepy.

"Well," says I again, "I'll tell yez more about that same in a minute. She had a mighty quarrel, I say, concernin' the owin' of the farm she was livin' on. Ye see Mister Maloney—'as fine a boy as ever lived, pace to his soul!—well, he left it all to his wife, and he hadn't been dead a month before his cousin Mike came flusterin' around wid a law paper called a mortgage, or something like that, and claimed the property hisself—the baste! And she—poor crature!—aither payin' most everything she kud lay her hands on to the lawyers, was glad to get shet of the whole business, and come over to this country, with nothin' but the clothes on her back, and one chist; Mike, he livin' on the farm like a gentleman, an, she a washin' and scrubbin' by the day. Yez mind, now, how hard she used to work here last spring, while the house was a-clarin', and how lovely she did the ironin' wake ather wake? At last, in the fall, just about a month back, what should come from Ireland to her but a letter from Mike, tellin' how he had jest died in great trouble of mind an' body—"

"What! from Mike?" interrupted Tom.

"Och, how ye bother me!" says I, "from one of Mike's payple, then—where's the diffor?—and tellin' how he had confessed he had sold the farm, and that the paper he had got it by was all a lie indade, and he frettin' to the last bekase he must die widdout Mrs. Maloney's forgiveness; and in the same letter they send her fifty pounds that Mike left her on his dyin' bed."

"That was good in him," suggested Johnny.

"Och, good!" exclaimed I, wrathfully. "An' what good was it, an' he ather almost breakin' the poor crature's heart afore that? Well, she was plazed enough to get the money for all, as she told me herself, here in this blessed kitchen, for she said it would get her many a little convaynience that, barrin' it, she'd a had to do widdout; and that same evenin' she came to ask would the mistress let me go stop wid her that night, for she felt kind of skeered-like to be alone ather hearin' uv Mike dyin', an' he worrin' ather her. Well, your mother was willin', and thin Mrs. Maloney asked would I go home with her at onest, and mind the place for her, while she went just to the shop to get some things she was ather wantin' over Sunday. The payple of the house where Mrs. Maloney was stoppin', ye see, was strange to her, as she hadn't had a room there more'n about ten days. Well," continued I, dropping me voice to a whisper again, "I went back wid her, and thin she lit a candle on the table standin' in the middle of her room, and told me if I would sate myself for a moment or two she would just take a run in the street for the things she wanted. But I tell you she wasn't gone ten minutes before I wished myself out of it again. There was the quarest creakin' noises goin' on yez ever heard, and the candle began to flare backw'ards and forwards, so," as suitin' the action to the word, I accidentally extinguished the candle on the table, leaving the kitchen quite dim, except in the corner where Aunt Mary and meself had been working."

"Wait!" said Johnny, who was becoming rather nervous; "let me light the candle before you go on."

"Och, what's the matter wid ye?" cried I. "Be aisy, will ye, and kape yer safe till I tell yez. Well, the quare noises got worse and worse, and the candle kep' flarin' wilder and wilder, until at last it went out on me intirely, and there I staid in the dark. All in a fluster, I made me way to the door, and, belave me, if Mrs. Maloney—bad luck ter her—hadn't locked it by mistake and taken the key wid her! So aither gropin' my way about the room, and knockin'

over the things trying to find a match, I bethought me to knock on the wall and find if there wasn't anybody in the next room that would push me in a match or two under the door, when—the saints protect us!—if I didn't hear the awfulest groanin' a-comin' out of the wall that iver a mortal heard! So I just whipt the shoes and frock off uv me, and was under the bed-clothes in a wink of yer eye."

"Oh dear! I don't wonder you were frightened, Biddy," said Kitty, as the children huddled more closely about me, and even Master Tom drew a few steps nearer to me, and sat down.

"Do yez, now?" whispered I, confidentially.

"But the worst hasn't come yet. Well, there I lay all gathered up in the bed, tryin' to kape the groanin' out uv me ears, when I felt somethin' pullin'—pullin' softly at the bed-covers, and thin if somethin' warm didn't kind uv bratie over me face. Just as I was goin' to skrame out, Mrs. Maloney came bustlin' in, all uv a fluster for kappin' me alone so long; and I felt quite comforted-like when I saw the candle lit again. After she was in the bed, she told me how she had bin persuaded into buyin' iver so many things more'n she meant to, spendin' two pounds in all. 'And do ye know, Biddy,' sez she, 'it puts me all in a shiver-like when I think how I've bin spendin' Mike's money, and he moulderin' in the grave, widdout me ever givin' him at all, at all?' 'Och, don't be silly, Mrs. Maloney!' sez I, tryin' to comfort her, though I couldn't help shiverin' meself when I bethought me of the dreadful groanin' I had heard; 'don't be botherin' yerself wid such notions; Mike's got other things to trouble him now, I warrant, besides the likes of ye!' And so we got to talkin' about one thing an' another, until at last we both fell asleep."

"And didn't anything more happen, after all?" asked Tom, quite disappointed.

"Wait till yez hear, and don't be spillin' my story," said I as mysteriously as I could, and looking nervously around me, causin' all the children to do the same: "Well, as I was sayin', we both fell asleep, and I didn't wake up till the middle uv the night. The moonlight by that time was a-pourin' in the room, showin' all the furniture and everythin' distinctly, and there, in the corner, I saw the black thing a-standin' that must ha' bin pullin' my bed-covers, and it a-lookin' at me with glarin' eyes; and the next minute if I didn't see a sight that made me almost lape out of the bed wid astonishment. There, on a chair close by Mrs. Maloney's side of the bed, wus—yez may belave me now, for I saw it with my own eyes—a skeleton! A skeleton, on a chair, a kind uv leanin' over forinst Mrs. Maloney; an' she sleepin', only fur the snorin', like a young baby."

"Oh, Biddy!" exclaimed all the children, in a breathless whisper, "what did you do?"

"Well, I hardly know how it happened, but I somehow fell asleep, and me lookin' at it. But after a while, the wind a-moanin', or the groanin' in the wall, woke me up again, and—"

"Was it there yet?" gasped Tom.

"Indade it was, just the same as before," returned I.

"Did it come to reproach her, Biddy?"

"Is it spake, you mane? Shure, Master Tom, how could it spake widdout a tongue; and did ye ever hear uv a skeleton wid a tongue? But wait a bit till I tell yez. Well, there I was lyin' lookin' at it, for I couldn't take my eyes off uv it for amazement; anyway, when the room gettin' lighter with the comin' mornin', Mrs. Maloney giv a start, and riz straight up in the bed—"

"And hadn't it disappeared by that time?" asked Tom, trembling all over.

"Never a bit!" answered I. "But Mrs. Maloney didn't seem to persave it at first: so she jumped out of bed and asked me wouldn't I hurry and get dressed. The words were no sooner out of her than she turned suddenly and looked full at it. The next minute her hand was upon the skeleton, a-raisin' it from the chair, and it a-tremblin' all over."

The children clung closer to me then, and Tom managed to gasp out:

"Well, what happened then? Tell us, quick!"

"Happened!" exclaimed I. "Why, nothing; only Mrs. Maloney gave it a shake or two and put it on; and a very fine skeleton it was! It had thirty springs to it, and made Mrs. Maloney look mighty grand, I tell yez. But whod'a-ever thought of Kitty Maloney wearin' such toggery as that! But the fifty pounds had overcome her sinse intirely."

The children began to laugh, and Tom looked rather sheepish as he said:

"Humph! I knew it would turn out to be something of that kind."

"But the black goblin, Biddy, with the glaring eyes?" asked Johnny, not quite satisfied.

"The goblin!" cried I, in mock amazement; "and did I say now it was a goblin? It was the black cat, ye silly crature, that Mrs. Maloney kapes with her, in spite uv the torment that it is."

"And the creaking Biddy, and the groans in the wall?"

"Och! sure, I clane forgot to tell you what that was; that was a poor old soul in the next room a-rookin' in an old chair, an' a-groanin' wid the tooth-ache."

"And Mrs. Maloney's scar," asked Kitty; "how did she get that?"

"Didn't I tell yez?" said I, innocently. "Well, that came from her tumbin' on the hot coals when she was a baby. But sakes alive! if it ain't strikin' nine. Go to bed with yez, now; and you, Master Tom, don't be so aisy skeered with skeletons and such trash after this."

Tom was "missing" in an instant, and he confessed to me privately, the next morning, that he dreamed that night of a Christmas-tree full of skeletons, and Santa Claus dancing a jig around it, with a pipe in his mouth, and a funny hoop skirt about his body.

I had me way for that once; but me "ghost stories" were allowed no more for the future.

Now that Biddy has told her story with both tact and cheerfulness, the reader may be informed of the cause of the melancholy remark with which she preceded it. This arose from the fact of her going to leave the country with the betrothed daughter of the squire, and "take up her quarters" as she called it, in New "Zaleand." Her young mistress she loved with all the tenderness and truth of which the Irish heart is capable. To live with her she was about to abandon both kindred and country, never more to return, but still she felt that she would be happy with Agnes, whose turn it now was to tell a story.

LUCY MAY. AGNES'S STORY.

Lucy's cell was in a distant wing of the building, and she seldom left it, except in charge of a keeper, as she was at times very furious, and it was not always safe to cross her path when these wild fits were on her; indeed, it was never safe for one her inferior in strength to be alone with her; for there was no knowing at any time what strange vagaries her disordered mind might take, or at what hour her fits of fury might come upon her.

In her younger years, Lucy had been gentle and beautiful, and loving. Beautiful she still was, in despite of the fearful havoc which so many years of insanity had wrought. Small, almost fairy-like in her proportions, there was yet a sort of regal dignity in the dark flashing eye, and high, white brow; and a proud curve to the dainty neck, that made you almost think she was, in reality, the queen she at times fancied herself; and indeed her Majesty never trod her palace halls with a more right royal step, than did Lucy the narrow precincts of her cell.

She was scrupulously clean and neat, so that she never presented that squalid, wretched appearance, which so many of her class invariably do; and she was never satisfied unless the floor of her little room was perfectly clean, and the bright piece of carpet which had been given her, was placed exactly in the centre; and her wildest invocations were poured without mercy upon the heads of those who deviated from her rules of neatness and good order.

Poor Lucy! Love, that one great passion of the human heart which outlives every other, had brought her here, to be the inmate of a lunatic's cell; and as I looked upon the faded, time-worn features, I wondered if, in all God's bright and beautiful earth, there was a palace so high, or a hut so low, that this one cause for heart-break could not enter.

Lucy May was just twenty years of age, when she first met Harry Linton. He was the son of a wealthy merchant, and was travelling to kill the time which for the want of active exercise, hung heavily upon his hands. It was a beautiful Saturday evening, in early June, that the beautiful village of C—, with its neat white houses, shaded by lofty elms, attracted his attention, and he stopped to spend the Sabbath day amid its scenes of quiet loveliness.

It was at the village church, while the hymn which the good pastor had given out was being sung, that a sweet voice rising high above the choir, arrested his ear, so full, so clear, were its bird-like warblings, that he involuntarily turned to look upon the singer, when a vision of loveliness met his eye, such as his wild fancy had never pictured. Clad in robes of white, pure and spotless as her own maiden innocence, Lucy May realized his ideal of woman, and almost immediately he formed the resolution to possess her for his own. Full of this idea, he returned to his hotel to question the landlord, and learn from him that Lucy with a younger sister, were boarders at the parsonage.

I need not tell you of all the wiles which he practised to meet and obtain an introduction. Suffice it to say, they did meet, again and again, and each time the rose-tint on Lucy's cheek grew deeper and the long

lashes drooped lower and lower over the soft dark eyes, and when September had come, to fill the earth with beauty, and crown the year with her glory, leaving her sister Ellen, still at school, she returned to her humble home to claim a widowed mother's blessing on her betrothal.

With Lucy love was life. She had given herself without reserve, to the one her heart had chosen, and she entered upon the preparation for her marriage with a happiness that seemed perfect.

Christmas was the time appointed for the wedding, and Christmas Day had come. All through the morning Lucy had been busy superintending the arrangements. Her own hands had woven the garlands which decorated the little parlour. The house was filled with guests, and Lucy, clad in her bridal robes, waited in her own room the arrival of her lover.

Where was Harry Linton? Surely he should not tarry at such a time. And Ellen, too, who was to come with him, where was she? Surely some dreadful accident must have happened, to detain them. Hours passed away, and yet he came not. A dreadful fear seized upon the wedding guests, and the bride, fearfully pale, had left her room and mingled freely with the company below. But now the sound of carriage wheels are heard, and soon Mr. Linton, with the lovely Ellen leaning upon his arm, entered the room.

What pen can depict the consternation of the company when he led her forward, and stammering some few words of apology, introduced her as his own wife, Mrs. Harry Linton?

It was true—he had been married at the parsonage.

Confusion seized upon the company. Lucy's cheek grew pale as her wedding-gown. With a piercing shriek she tore the bridal-veil from her head, and trampling the rich clusters of orange-flowers under her feet, she fell to the ground in a death-like swoon.

From that time until the day of her death no ray of reason ever dawned upon her mental horizon. Her lucid intervals were brief, and were followed by seasons of the wildest fury. Thus, day by day, and year after year had passed away, until weary nature gave over the struggle, and she died.

It was a beautiful balmy day in October. Carefully we had folded the pale hands over the tired heart, which would never tire again; gently we had smoothed the dark hair over the white forehead, and had dropped a tear on the hollow cheek as we laid her down to rest. We had done what we could, and I stood alone in the gloaming, musing upon her sad fate, when I was startled by a deep, manly voice at my side, asking:

"Is Lucy May an inmate of this institution, and can I see her?"

"She was," I replied, "but she was buried to-day. Are you a friend?"

"A friend!—dead! Madam, look at me, I am Harry Linton!"

Mechanically I turned, and he followed me down the narrow pathway to Lucy's grave.

I left him there in the deepening twilight shadows, and I never saw him again. Whether he is yet a wanderer on the earth's bosom, or whether he has passed over Death's river to the shining shore, God knoweth.

Biddy's story, especially, had been a perfect success, and as applause is always stimulating, the daughter of a neighbouring gentleman-farmer volunteered a story, in the hope that she, too, would share some of the laurels of the company.

"Well done, Susan Barton!" cried George, "nothing like spirit."

"You must allow me, however," said she, "to tell it in the first person, and as if I, myself, were the real heroine."

"By all means!" several voices exclaimed at once, and Miss Barton began, somewhat nervously at first, but gradually gained courage, and finished triumphantly.

MY FATAL ERROR.

SUSAN BARTON'S STORY.

It is a quiet, beautiful place—my home. Leaning against the vine-wreathed trellis-work of the balcony my eye wanders over clustering flowers, a sloping velvety lawn, and across the calm waters to the forest-crowned mountains that seem to frown upon me as they lean against the western sky, where rests a gorgeous pile of clouds all dressed in crimson and gold. The twilight shadows deepen, but a denser shadow enshrouds and crushes my heart. Ah! who would envy me this luxurious home, and the wealth now all my own, did they know of the remorse gnawing my heart-strings and eating out my life—did they know at what a fearful price I purchased all these pleasant associations.

A widowed mother, so gentle and loving as to remind one of the angels, was my teacher and constant companion until my fifteenth birthday; then her pure spirit sought a happier clime, to dwell with angels; and I, her only child, was left to the care and charity of cold-hearted and miserly relatives.

After a year of dependence, during which I suffered much, not only from the absence of love and sympathy, but from taunting words and unjust reflections upon the memory of my mother, I looked around in vain for some employment by which I could earn a livelihood. I had no influential friends to assist, nor kind ones to advise me; and as I was useful to those whose roof sheltered me, I could not leave them except by stealth, and I was naturally too sensitive and retiring to go out alone and seek a home among strangers. Life looked so weary, with nothing but toil and unhappiness in the future, that it seemed a burden too great to endure. How often I prayed for death; but death comes not to the young and darkened life when most desired; yet I was happier then than now, for remorse was a stranger to my heart.

I was seventeen when I first met Mortimer Allison. He, like myself, was an orphan, and poor, but upon his brow was the stamp of Nature's nobility; and, alone and unaided, he was struggling onward and upward, not to win wealth, but a name that should be a watchword—a position that the rich might envy. My wrapt ear listened willingly to the words of love and tenderness that fell from his lips, and all the pent-up feeling of my heart, that had been buried since my mother's death, were given to him.

We were affianced, and he went to a distant city to establish himself in business and make a home for me. Thinking of him and the future, now so bright, I should not be unhappy I said; and the time would not seem so long to me. Alas! I over-calculated my powers of endurance! and as, one by one, the years went by, I became weary of toil, and the only pleasant moments of my life were those spent in reading the hopeful letters of Mortimer.

There was a new arrival at the house I called home. Mr. Everdell, a distant relative, who had spent the prime of life beneath the burning skies of India, searching for wealth, claimed the hospitality of his rich relatives, which was grudgingly extended to him until they learned of his almost fabulous wealth.

Very kindly, and in tones of deep emotion, did Mr. Everdell ask me of my mother, saying he knew her before her marriage; and when he saw how coldly I was treated—that they looked upon me as a menial—all the kindly sympathy of his heart was aroused, and each day he sought my society; and once, in defiance of the frowns of the family, he took me in his carriage to see the elegant house he had recently purchased, and was having fitted up as a permanent residence for himself. We passed through the house, lingered upon the balcony, shaded by creeping jessamine and flowering honeysuckles; and after strolling through the tastefully laid-out grounds, we stopped beneath the shade of a tall chestnut. Here was a rustic seat, upon a huge rock shelving over the water, and as my enchanted eye drank in all the beauty of the scene, and the perfumed breeze kissed my cheek, I exclaimed:

"How beautiful! One can never be unhappy in so lovely a spot!"

"Celeste, daughter of one I loved in my early manhood, if you will, this shall be your home. Your unhappy, isolated position, kindled my sympathy, and now love, enduring as life, fills my heart, and the wealth for which I toiled is all yours, with the incumbency of the old man. You are alone; give me the right to protect you. Will you be my wife?"

I looked up into the kindly beaming face, on which life had imprinted many a line, and reading only nobleness and goodness of heart, my first impulse was to tell of my betrothment, but there came bitter memories of the past mingled with fears that fortune would not smile upon Mortimer, and my home must ever be one of poverty and toil; so, placing my hand in the old man's hand, I said, that his name should be mine, and his home my home.

A shudder crept over me—a vision chilling my heart's blood flitted before my eyes—wildly glaring eyeballs were fixed upon me, ere sinking beneath the surface of the stream; and, uttering an exclamation of horror, I sprang back from the edge of the rock, and would have fallen, had not the strong arm of Mr. Everdell prevented. To his eager inquiries I said it was only a sudden chill and faintness, that would soon pass; but toil was undermining my health, he said, and I should no longer remain a dependant and menial in the home of my relatives. Had I then told him of the dream passing before my waking eyes, all might have been well, but I was too mercenary to heed the presentiment.

Mr. Everdell was kind and indulgent, but as his wife I was not happy. My life was a living falsehood, not only deceiving him by my manner, but my lips uttered endearing words that led him to believe I

had never loved another; and so he executed a will bequeathing me his entire property.

I had been two years a wife when there came a note from Mortimer Allison, asking to see me, and leaving it with me to appoint the time and place of meeting. My heart fluttered with tumultuous joy. Never for a day had I ceased to think of him, and hastily penning an answer that I would meet him upon the rock by the maple tree, in a feverish excitement I waited for nightfall.

The full moon was shining brightly as I stealthily left the house, and by a circuitous path sought the rock. Oh, why did not some guardian angel keep me back? why not whisper that that one error would be fatal—would darken all the remaining years of my life? The dew-laden flowers exhaled a soft perfume, that seemed whispering of the goodness of Him from whom I should have no secrets, causing me once to pause, but heeding not, I banished the thought and hurried on.

Mortimer was impatiently waiting for me, and taking my hand asked was I happy since selling myself for gold? I told him of the past; that weary of toil, and despairing of his success, I was powerless to refuse the wealth offered me, but my heart was only his—I had never loved my husband—that he was old, and could not live for ever.

"Heartless woman, is it thus that you repay my kindness?" and pale and trembling with rage, my husband stood before me.

One moment he fixed his eyes sternly upon me, then quickly, with almost superhuman strength, he hurled Mortimer from the rock into the deep water, but in doing so lost his balance and fell from the rock. My shrieks brought the servants to my husband's aid. They laid him on the grass, while I kneeling by his side, frantically besought him to forgive me. The quivering lips uttered no sound, but the dimming eyes rested a moment upon me in pity and forgiveness, and then his life-light went out.

Mortimer still lives. He has won a name of which any one may well be proud; but I have not met him since that night, nor would I; that scene places an insuperable barrier between us.

Five years have since passed, and the world calls me happy; yet not one moment of contentment is mine. My heart is not at peace with itself, and never shall I cease to regret that one fatal error of my earlier life.

An old man with a white head, who all the evening had sat very quiet, now volunteered a tale.

"Many years have gathered upon my head," said he; "and although my memory may, in some things, be slightly impaired, it is not so far gone but it can enable me to rehearse a tale in which I have no doubt you will be interested. This will more particularly be the case when you are told that it was a brother of mine who was the principal actor in the story."

This preface immediately commanded attention, when the old man commenced.

FIVE MONTHS ON THE DEEP.

THE OLD MAN'S STORY.

A HAPPY, careless childhood, spent in the midst of parents, brothers, sisters, and friends, had passed away, and I had reached the age of sixteen, with a growing and unquerable desire to make another home upon the deep.

My entreaties prevailed. I was allowed to go to sea with a friend of my father. Before sailing, the captain received a request from my father, that he would submit me to some pretty severe tests, as he wished me to become thoroughly sick of the profession I had adopted. This precaution did not avail. On the contrary, there was a fascination in even the hardships I encountered, that riveted my attachment to all things connected with the sea; and I clung to it with a deeper devotion for every cross that came to me.

This devotion increased with my years. It was favourable to my promotion, too; and, at twenty-one, I found myself in command of a fine brig. Few rise with steps so rapid; yet I do not think I was vain or arrogant. I counted it as a natural consequence of earnest striving, and accepted it as honour fairly won.

Contrary winds prevailed for more than half the passage, detaining us woefully. The provisions, poor as they were, began to grow scant; and, for forty days, our men subsisted on so little food, that I wondered at their comparatively good condition.

The usual passage, in those days, when clipper ships were a novelty, ought not to have been more than seventy days, from England to South America. But our actual passage was one hundred and fifty. For days, even weeks, we were becalmed most of the time. When a breeze sprang up, it was often the contrary way. Our brig was, proverbially, a slow sailer. Everything tended to make ours an uncomfortable passage.

When we sailed, I had taken a young man, who wished to go to America, but was not able to pay his passage. He was well-educated, and had served as second mate of a ship. I offered him the station of second mate, for my second mate had died of fever while at Lima, and I wanted one. His name was Martin Appleton.

Some would think I had erred in stocking the brig so lightly with provisions; but I repeat that they were very scarce and enormously high; and my resources were quite limited. I had bought two barrels of beef, one of pork, a few barrels of indifferent bread, half a barrel of rice, and a small quantity of flour. This was for the fore-cabin, but the food for the cabin was equally short. This, with economy, would have carried us through an ordinary passage, with the addition of an ox, which we killed just after we sailed. This last, however, as we did not salt it, nor even dry it, was partly wasted, as we could not keep it sweet.

One day—I shall never forget it!—we fell in with a wreck. A fine ship had encountered a gale, in which she had been left a mere hulk upon the waters. In that mere hulk, however, two living human beings were left. Let me do justice to those who fled from the ship in boats, to save their lives. These two were thought to be dead. It was a sick man and his daughter; and, at the time of the catastrophe, both were insensible, from the effects of illness and fright combined; and this so nearly resembled death that there was no doubt that they who fled acted upon that belief.

From that long trance, they awoke to find themselves deserted—alone in the dismantled ship, the wide waste of waters around them, the boats all gone, and no help from any earthly arm.

The girl had seen the brig, had roused her father to the effort of dragging his weak limbs from the cabin, and succeeded in showing a signal to attract us. Then the two sat down calmly to await the result. They knew not how long the boats had been gone, but they were wholly out of sight.

We took them off, and also obtained from the wreck a few stores, such as bread, wine, and rice; but the sinking condition of the wreck made it impossible to take food in any desirable quantity.

The old man lived until sunrise next morning. The exertion had been too much for his feeble frame, and he sank to his last sleep like an infant upon its mother's breast.

Poor Dora Kenneth! It was sad enough to see her trying to bear up bravely against this great woe. She would see her father's remains after we had prepared them for the water grave to which he was to be consigned—would kneel beside him, with her hand upon his cold brow, while I read the solemn and touching service; or he dead; nor could I force her from the deck until she had seen him committed to the deep.

For days afterwards, the poor girl would sit for hours, and watch the long foamy track of the waves, as if she half-expected they would restore her father to her arms once more.

So young, so desolate, so full of grief, what wonder that her situation awoke the full tide of sympathy in every heart? Mine bled for her sorrows, and I tried every art to win her from them.

"I am very grateful, O you, Captain Elliott," she said to me, one day, "but indeed you will be kinder to me, if you will let my grief take its course. Bear with me a little, until God shall heal my wounds in his own way."

Thenceforth, she was left to wander about the vessel. It was only in silent, unobtrusive ways that I attempted to minister to her personal comfort, avoiding all mention of her father, but showing, at the same time, that I was thoughtful of her situation.

Poor Dora!

"You are suffering from something. You cannot deceive me, Captain Elliott. You have grown thin and haggard. Tell me what it is. Let me sympathise with you, as you have with me."

"How can I tell you what I hardly dare to think of for you, for myself, for all?"

"Tell me!" she said, grasping my arm tightly—my arm, so worn and thin that she shuddered as she touched it.

"Tell me!" she repeated.

"Are you brave enough to bear it?"

"Try me."

I took her hand in my own—hers wasted by sorrow—mine wasted by another cause.

"Dora, we are nearly starving," I said—repenting the words as soon as spoken.

What a face was lifted to mine. Her eyes grew absolutely lustrous, yet her face was white as death.

"And you never told me? Cruel! How could I have eaten had I known it? But now—now I can die for you! Thank God, I can show my gratitude to you so!"

"Dora, those are wild words. You shall not talk so. Life must be preserved as long as possible upon

our scanty fare; but you, who have never taken enough to support your health and strength, must take even more than merely to sustain life."

"Not so. I will take my share to please you, but no more."

I took her at her word. I must not try to prolong her life beyond mine; for I felt that untold horrors to her might follow my death. That day I was obliged to shorten even the scanty allowance we had already. A half a biscuit, a tiny bit of meat, a spoonful of the wine I had taken from the wreck—this was three times a day administered to our half-famished men.

For Dora, and I think most of all for little Fred Richards, my grief was great. Hunger is so terrible to a growing boy.

Cheever had become insane. A spoonful of wine which I had thoughtlessly given him had revived his old longing, and he lay raving in his berth. This left me with but four men to work the brig. The steward I could well spare now. His "occupation was gone."

We were drifting slowly homeward, but should we ever reach that blessed haven? I asked myself this question with trembling, as I came upon deck and found Dora sitting quietly, her face grave and white but calm and even placid, and Fred Richards, wasted to a mere shadow, lying at her feet. She had been feeding him, I knew, with her own scanty allowance; for the boy held a crumb of bread between his fingers. Exhaustion was doing its work upon him. I was thankful that he could sleep.

I sat down by Dora. She trembled perceptibly. She believed that I had to tell her of still greater sufferings to come. I was shocked when I looked at her hand. The rings had dropped off, and she sat playing listlessly with them. She put one upon my finger easily enough—one that seemed like a fairy's ring.

I took off my own, which I had attached to my watch-chain, as I could not keep it on my finger, and hung it about her neck. She did not move. I looked at her, and she had fainted—fainted from hunger. I laid her gently by little Fred Richards, and flew to bring her some refreshment. I returned with bread and wine—my own store for the day. I had not tasted it. I took her in my arms—it was but a child's weight I bore—and poured a few drops between those pale lips. She swallowed them eagerly.

"Oh, God!" I exclaimed, "take us both now! Leave her not to added suffering."

I felt her thin hands close over mine as she lay on my shoulder. In that terrible hour, when heart and flesh were fainting, I told Dora the secret of my love. Was that story ever told in such an hour before? I know not; but I also know that never lover's heart thrilled with deeper joy, in marble halls, amid rich viands and the full flow of red wine, than did mine at that moment when the sweet voice, with such a dying fall, breathed out an answering love. It was love sanctified by the approach of death, as I then believed; yet death had no terrors after that avowal. In that thought was merged all others. I forgot that I had given her the last crumb—the last drop! I forgot the dying boy at our feet—the famished man who were urging our slow vessel along. Yes, all were forgotten, for a moment, save the dear voice that kept repeating, as if in a dream:

"Francis, I love you!"

Only for a moment! Ned Brigham had been at the masthead for fifteen minutes. I saw him go up, but did not question him. I was fast losing all concern for anything.

Suddenly a shout went out from the lips of that poor, wasted being. Dora had slipped from my arms, but I had not strength to speak or move.

The young man descended from his giddy height, and tottered towards me. I looked the inquiry I could not speak. The poor fellow could not utter a word, but pointed to an object on the water.

What a strange apathy had come over me! I was not stirred by the shout. There was no cheer in its tones. I looked out mechanically upon the world of waters before me. I even saw the ship which Brigham pointed out, bearing down towards us; but it seemed to me a mockery, as I glanced back to the two young creatures at my feet. Two days ago, and help would have availed. But now! they were dying. I had loved little Fred Richards as I would a brother. His mother had entrusted him to me with prayers and tears—her only son, and she a widow! If, by some chance that I could not now foresee, I should live to reach home once more, how could I tell that afflicted mother the story of her child's death?

I think Brigham believed I had gone mad. Of all the men, he alone retained unimpaired vitality. He had never desponded—never betrayed any suffering. The brave fellow! He did not know what to make of my apathy; but the mate, who had heard his shout, was coming on deck, and appealed to him. Appleton was tottering about feebly. He had been weakened by sickness before. He gave all up to Brigham. He

it was that hailed the ship, and made known our situation.

God knows, I ought to have been thankful for the relief that came pouring in upon us; for the rich wine that the generous captain of the ship insisted on administering to me and the starved beings at my feet.

It was not until that subtle fluid circulated in my veins, and sent a thrill through my wasted frame, that I could rouse myself from my torpor. All that had passed that day, seemed like a dream. I seemed to hear a low sound, afar off, the faint burden of which was, "Francis, I love you!" but that was in the dream too.

By-and-bye, consciousness and motion returned to me. I recovered strength to press the captain's hand, and to speak of our sufferings. He was holding Dora in his arms, feeding her by single drops. She, too, seemed rescued from death.

He generously spared me two able men. And we were all young, too, and there are probably hundreds, perhaps thousands of aged captains and sailors, who have never experienced a tithe of our sufferings.

We were supplied with provisions; and a boy, a very tolerable cook, was put on board, and when we had farewelled to our preservers, we had recovered a certain portion of new strength to carry us on our path through the deep.

Twenty days saw us safe in port. My friends came down to greet me. I placed Dora by my mother's side, and asked her to take care of the poor child for my sake. She knew what that meant.

"You will come too, Francis?" she said, timidly. I followed soon enough to find my father holding her in his arms and my mother plying her with some posset or other. They had taken her to their hearts at once, divining the tie that bound us to each other.

My own Dora! She has been my wife twenty years to-day, I find, by the calendar. Can it be so long since I heard that sweet voice speak her love! Ah, well! She repeats it each day, and it is the burden on the lips of the children, from the rosy girl of eighteen years, down to the little prattler of eighteen months.

Since then, I have made thirteen voyages. Quick passages they have been, in fast-sailing ships; but that terrible voyage has still its sweetness to my memory. But for that, I should not have seen the dear face that smiles at me now by the firelight, when we talk over our voyage in the evening—a talk that brings tears to the eyes of another sweet Dora, her mother's living image. God! Father, I thank thee for these rich blessings!

As the squire saw that fear and sadness were beginning to take possession of the juvenile members of the party, he now, in a merry key, sang aloud:

Of Christmas tales we've had enough,
Now for a game at blind-man's-buff,
That every one, both young and old,
May run and race away the cold;
For Christmas comes but once a year,
The young and old alike to cheer.

This spirited impromptu, coming from a quarter so sudden and unexpected, broke up the group that had hitherto kept themselves so closely wedged together "before the log-fire," that even a fairy, although no bigger than a man's thumb-nail, might not have got between them, scattered the company over the apartment, and heartily joined them in the game which the squire had appropriately suggested in his cheerfully sung extemporaneous stanza.

A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN.—An old writer says that to make an entirely beautiful woman it would be necessary to take the head from Greece, the bust from Austria, the feet from Hindostan, the shoulders from Italy, the walk from Spain, and the complexion from England. At that rate she would be a mosaic, and the man who married her might well be said to have "taken up a collection."

A MELANCHOLY CATASTROPHE.—A great part of the Lunatic Asylum of Montreuil-sous-Laon, Aisne, has been destroyed by fire, and six of its inmates burnt to death. The establishment was full of lunatics of both sexes. Among them was a young man about twenty-five years of age, who was usually kept in a separate cell, with a strait waistcoat on. On the day before the fire he was visited by some of his relatives, who requested the director to release him from that confinement, and as he then appeared more tranquil it was done. The following morning, by some means or other, he got possession of a chemical match, and at night set fire to his bed, which was soon burnt, and the fire afterwards caught the woodwork, with which all the cells of the violent lunatics are lined, and next burnt through the ceiling to the floor above. Once

getting vent, the flames rapidly extended right and left, and spread alarm throughout the place. The keepers and others then rushed to the different cells to get out the inmates, which was a work of great difficulty, as many of them were strapped down to their beds, and after they were set free they had to be carried out by main force. The task was at length accomplished, and the guardians and others were congratulating themselves that no lives had been lost, when, on making another round among the cells, they found that six females had rushed unobserved into the flames, where they met a horrible death. As for the madman who had caused the catastrophe, he was afterwards found running about in the garden, singing and appearing highly delighted with what he had done.

OUR CHRISTMAS STORY.

THE DARK DAYS OF DECEMBER.

IN FOUR PARTS.

CHAPTER I. THE POCKET-BOOK.

He had just arrived at the Euston Station, from Liverpool, and he had only yesterday landed at Liverpool from Australia. A tall, muscular man, with large bushy whiskers, and a worn, weather-beaten face, marked in every line with nerve and decision, but stamped too plainly with the traces of some great agony.

"Here, my man," he said, addressing one of the porters. "Just put that black trunk and that portmanteau on a cab, will you?"

He pointed with a large stick he carried, to a trunk, on which "J. M." was painted in white letters, and to a portmanteau with the same initials.

"Can't you manage it?" he said, as the porter, assisted by the cabman, struggled to hoist the black trunk on to the roof of the vehicle, and only got it on the wheel. "Let me try. There, up it goes!"

And true enough it was up, but the cab shook beneath its weight.

"Nuggets, sir?" said the porter, as he touched his cap and smiled an appeal for the customary trifle.

"Not all," replied the traveller, curtly.

The porter winked at the cabman, and pocketing the gratuity which the regulations of the company said he should be instantly discharged for receiving, muttered something about "a merry Christmas to your honour," and went to look after more luggage and more sixpences.

"Where to, sir?" inquired the cabman, as the traveller stood on the platform, apparently lost in thought.

"Ah! where indeed," was the reply. "Do you know Crayfield, in Kent?"

"I know it, sir," said the cabman, smiling, "but I can't exactly drive there, seeing it's a matter of twenty miles or more, and the snow's on the ground enough to pull a horse's shoes off."

"Tut, man, you know what I mean!" exclaimed the traveller, impatiently. "Of course I want to go there by coach, and I want you to drive me to where the coach starts from."

"There ain't ne'er a coach as goes any way that way at all now, sir. It's all rail, and nothing but rail. Werry different to when you was here last, sir, I should say?"

"Very, indeed! But, come, I suppose you can take me to the railway station. How near does the line go to Crayfield?"

"Hard upon two mile of it."

"Oh, well, that must do. What station do we go to?"

"London Bridge."

"Then, come, look sharp, and let's get there."

The cabman had noticed that during this conversation the traveller held tightly in his hand a large black pocket-book, bulky, as cabby imagined, with notes, and clasped with a large steel clasp. He especially noticed this, because, during their conversation, he observed a suspicious-looking character dodging about in the neighbourhood, with his eyes greedily fixed upon that pocket-book.

He noticed, too, that when the traveller threw a large opossum-rug over his shoulder, and stepped into the cab, the pocket-book had either been changed from the right hand to the left, or had been put away for safety. At any rate, it was not in the hand in which the cabman first saw it.

This occurrence struck him so forcibly, that as he drove to the station he could not get it out of his mind, and he kept repeating to himself:

"I wonder where he put that pocket-book?"

As for the traveller, he sat inside the cab, staring right and left at the sights about. It wanted only a few days to Christmas, and, as is customary at such a period in England, the shops displayed a profusion of light and a greenness of decoration in keeping with

the season. Everywhere the holly and the laurel were cheerily conspicuous, and great artificial roses of cut paper decked out the shops with meretricious ornament. It was many years since the occupant of the cab had seen a Christmas in England. The last one he had spent beneath a sultry sky, in hot scorching winds and blinding dust, and he was sitting, in canvas trousers and shirt-sleeves, under a flapping apology for a tent.

He was thinking over the contrast, when suddenly he placed his hand on his breast-pocket.

"Good God!" he exclaimed; "can I have lost it?"

He threw open his coat, dived deep into the pocket, then, standing up as well as the cab would allow him, searched all his other pockets in rapid succession. Then he stooped down, and groped about the bottom of the cab. He tried the seats next, and then, turning deathly pale, he sat down and reflected.

He was, however, a man of action, and the next thing he did was to stop the cab.

"Drive back to the station!" he said. "Don't spare the whip—drive for your life, man!"

"What's the matter, sir?" said the cabman, as he turned his horse. "Lost anything, sir?"

"Quick—quick!" exclaimed the traveller, furiously, and disregarding the question. "Drive, I tell you, as though your life depended on it!"

"It's that pocket-book," said the cabman to himself, as he laid the whip about his horse's shoulders. "It's that pocket-book, for a pound!"

They were now well in the heart of the City, but by dint of a little coaxing, and a good deal of beating, the horse soon found his way back to the Euston Station.

The traveller sprang out directly he reached the platform. An inspector of police was lounging up and down.

"Half-an-hour ago," said the traveller, addressing the officer, "I am all but certain that I dropped a pocket-book here—a black pocket-book." And he walked about looking anxiously along the edge of the kerbstones and the pavement.

"Indeed, sir?" said the inspector. "I've seen nothing of it; but please to step this way."

And he walked leisurely towards the luggage-department, followed by the traveller.

"This gentleman," he said, addressing the clerk in attendance, "has lost a pocket-book. Has it been brought here?"

"Not heard of such a thing," replied the clerk, making an entry.

"Pocket-books, you see, sir," said the inspector, smiling, "are not often brought here. Did it contain anything of value?"

The stranger paused, and the inspector waited and looked suspicious.

"Well, yes," replied the traveller, struggling to suppress some deep emotion. It contained papers of very great value, at least, to me!

"Only papers!" said the inspector; "well, then, the best thing you can do is to get a bill printed, offering a reward, and describing the papers. In the meantime, every inquiry shall be made. Perhaps you will oblige me with your card."

There was again an ominous pause on the part of the traveller, and again the inspector grew suspicious. "The truth is," said the stranger, "I am travelling, and my card would not be of much use to you. I will come here again to-morrow, and should the book be found I will then describe its contents."

"And about the bill? The best way of going to work will be to offer a reward."

"No, no bill!" replied the traveller decisively. "Any reward you may think fit to promise, I will willingly pay. But I should be glad if the book could be recovered without publicity."

As the traveller departed, the wily inspector looked at the clerk, and said:

"There's a mystery in this, Jones. I'm half-inclined to think that it's not all on the square."

CHAPTER II. THE LETTER.

CRAYFIELD was a pretty little Kentish village on the high road to the South Coast. In the old days, the mail-coach rattled along its one street, and changed horses at the "Greyhound," the principal inn in the place. But the railway, while running the mail-coach off the road, had disdained to come within less than two miles of Crayfield, and so had put it, as it were, half out of the world.

The lord of the manor was Mr. Vincent Markham and the manor house, picturesquely called "The Gables," overlooked the village from a distant hill.

It was situated at one extremity of a small but well-wooded park, and was approached by an avenue of trees, now bare and wintry-looking, but stately in their grandeur. Its many windows, and its warm red

brick frontage, gave it a hearty, cheery appearance, not diminished by the high-pitched roof, and the quaint curled chimneys from which the smoke gracefully ascended in the clear wintry air. Its huge porch, too, overhanging the stout oaken door, with the great knocker that might have been used to summon a garrison to surrender, added to its picturesque aspect, and suggested a substantial snugness within.

And this suggestion was fully borne out by the interior. In the wide hall, the flooring of which was composed of alternate squares of brown and white stone, stood a billiard-table, while on the elaborately panelled walls were antlers and fowling-pieces, and a whole armoury of quaint old-world weapons, with here and there a dark, old picture, in perfect keeping with its companion trophies.

Conspicuous, however, on the present occasion, was a gigantic bunch of mistletoe, under which every one ascending the stairs must necessarily pass; while, to keep this in countenance, garlands of holly and laurel were disposed about the walls in true country profusion.

Sweeping out towards the centre of the hall was a dark massive staircase, with stairs half as broad as a dining-room table, and at each side of this staircase was a wide corridor, into which the principal chambers on the ground-floor opened.

This staircase, with its carved balustrades, rising between richly painted walls, on which cupids were seen sporting in all the freedom of classic nudity, led to a deeply-bayed window, commanding a prospect of the well-wooded park, and seeming to invite the love-making which always progresses best in secluded places; and, strange enough, at the moment we approached this bay window, two persons are deeply engaged in the old, old, business, and they look wondrously well suited to each other.

A tall, well-formed young man, of some twenty summers, is deeply engaged in tutoring a fair, elegant girl, in the mysteries of acting. This fair girl has exquisitely formed features, long, carelessly flowing, auburn hair, and a soft blue eye, from whose wondrous depths beams the one great attribute of woman—love!

They are in a somewhat stage-like position. His left hand holds her right, and his right hand is pressed upon her shoulder. Into her eyes he seems to look as though those clear blue depths fascinated his soul. "You see the position, my dear Agnes?" he says, and then, in the coolest manner possible, he kisses her! "And I am to say—that?" she asks.

"I love you!"

The soft blue eyes droop a little, and, with a gentle remonstrance, she replies:

"But how could I, before so many people?"

"Recollect, my love," says the young man, "it's only a charade. And in a charade nothing is thought of such things. It's only acting, you see."

"But if it were not to you, I could not say it. I suppose I am a very poor actor?"

"My darling Agnes, I never saw any one act better. And no one will blame you for acting with me, as though it were real life. Indeed, I like it all the better."

At this moment, a step on the stairs warned the lovers that they must act only. They therefore commenced in real earnest with the charade, and just as Agnes repeated the words "I love you," laughing, and yet looking serious, as she did so, a third person came to complete the scene.

"And I," said the intruder, "say this shall not be! in short, I forbid it!"

"Capital, Bella!" exclaimed Greville Markham. "That's the right Christmas spirit! But you want the dress, you know; the mob-cap, the brocade gown, the sour visage, and all the rest of it, to make it real."

"I don't know that!" exclaimed Bella, with a look that had more meaning in it than a charade might warrant.

The speaker was a beauty of a totally different cast to Agnes Markham. Her brown hair, hazel eyes, and deep-toned complexion, added to a certain decision of manner, and a carriage that was stately for a girl not yet in her majority, strongly contrasted with the softer charms of her cousin, and seemed to suggest that while the chief attribute of one was love, that of the other was pride!

And so it was. No two girls, brought up together as these had been, could well be more dissimilar. Agnes was all impulse and geniality; Bella was cool and full of calculation. And yet they loved each other dearly. But probably as Bella had a brother, and that brother was in love with Agnes, there may have been something between the two girls that accounted for a certain hauteur on one side, and submission on the other.

However, the charade that was to delight the Christmas visitors, was duly rehearsed; Bella, who was to take an ungracious part to suit the exigencies of the plot,—going through it with *ecart*, and Greville and Agnes acquitting themselves to their perfect satisfaction.

They had just finished the last scene—the "whole word," as the dinner-bell rang; and they were about to enter the dining-room, when a new object of interest presented itself.

This was nothing more important than the letter-bag; but as the letter-bag is always a feature in a country house, it was opened with avidity. On this occasion there were more letters than usual, and what was a greater wonder, there was a letter for Agnes!

"A letter for you!" said Bella.

"For you!" exclaimed Greville Markham.

Agnes turned pale.

"Excuse me," she said, nervously crumpling up the letter, when she had looked at it, "but I should like to read this alone, and I should like to read it now."

"Your uncle," returned Bella, severely, "is waiting dinner."

Here Greville interposed.

"My dear Agnes," he said, "let me read it for you. You know —"

"Hush!" said Agnes, in a whisper. "Pray don't ask me. Do you see the handwriting?"

And she held up the letter for him to read the superscription.

Greville read it, and looked pityingly at Agnes.

"My dear girl," he said, "it is fitter that my father should read that letter before you pollute —"

He paused here, for Agnes, looking at him reproachfully, burst into tears.

Mr. Vincent Markham, who was always punctual to his dinner-hour, and who had entered the dining-room, and found it vacant, now came upon the scene.

"Why, what's this?" he exclaimed, looking anxiously at his son.

"My dear father," said Greville, who was a poor dissembler, "the post has come in, and—and—Agnes has received a letter—a Christmas present, or something of the sort, and we want her to wait till after dinner before opening it."

Bella looked reproachfully at Greville, and then turned to her father:

"It is as well," she said, "in a matter like this, to tell the truth, and the truth only. Agnes has received a letter from her father!"

"Then," said Mr. Markham, in as soft a tone as he could master, "Agnes will of course give that letter to me. She knows our compact."

"I rather think," said Bella, looking at her cousin, "that she will not."

It was now the lover's turn.

"Agnes," he said, whispering in her ear, "for my sake!"

He was answered only by a burst of sobs, but the victory was half-over, for the letter was loosely held, and Greville gently took it.

"My dear Agnes," said Mr. Markham, taking his niece's hand when he found she had so far yielded, "you must not think this determination of mine harsh. You know I have good reason, with your welfare at heart, for declining to encourage any correspondence from—from him. He can be nothing to you but a name, and when I recollect that you are so soon to be nearer to me even than you are now, I feel that it is only my duty to watch over you and guard you from the slightest taint of evil. Still, it is for you to choose between us. There stands your future husband, but your husband on one condition, and that is that you renounce one who has been a father to you, but has, I am sorry to say, been a reproach to the name of Markham!"

This speech might have come to an end earlier, so far as Agnes was concerned, for at the words "there stands your future husband," she had fallen into Greville's arms unconscious of the rest.

CHAPTER III.

CHRISTMAS PREPARATIONS.

It was settled on all hands that Crayfield was to spend a very jolly Christmas; indeed a Christmas as much after the olden style as modern ideas could reasonably compass.

Every home in the village was to have its joint of meat, and its so many pounds of materials for a Christmas pudding. Each adult male was to have his half-gallon of beer, with a further allowance in the event of his being a family man, while the children were to be regaled with so many oranges, so many apples, and nuts enough to keep their teeth going from noon till bedtime.

Outdoor sports were not to be neglected; but, the season being considered, indoor amusements were in greatest favour, so a large barn was engaged by the squire, and dressed up with white and pink calico, and the flags of all nations, and garnished by the peasantry themselves with all the available green leaves in the neighbourhood.

In this barn, on Christmas eve, the villagers were to meet, attired in their cleanest smocks and their

most flowery gowns, to dance Sir Roger de Coverley to the music of a fiddle and a flute, to drink toast and ale, and to play at kiss-in-the-ring under the huge bunch of mistletoe in the centre. At a certain period of the evening, before the toast and ale had gone round too often, the rector was to attend and talk to his humble parishioners in a general way, but not at all in the way of a sermon about Christmas. After this, his wife was to distribute the flannel petticoats that had been partly subscribed for by the village matrons for some weeks previously, and then the whole company were to sing "God save the Queen" upstanding, and with three cheers for the squire and rector, and the rector's lady, were to go straight home without calling in at the Tom and Jerry.

On Christmas Day they were to be left to themselves and the beef and the pudding; but on Boxing night there was to be a kind of Morrice dance in the park, in front of the "Gables," for which a Lord of Misrule—a very degenerate character in these days—in the person of Mr. Markham's supernannated gardener was duly provided.

And to crown all, on Boxing night there was to be a supper to the tenants of the estate, at which Mr. Markham was to preside, with a long list of toasts before him, suitable to the agricultural mind.

Everything was, in fact, to be very stirring and jolly in Crayfield at Christmas, and the oldest inhabitant was prepared to take his affidavit that "for many a year he had not seen such preparations!"

There were two opposing forces, however, in the town, who made these preparations a bone of contention, over their pipes, in the parlour of the "Greyhound," and pulled them to pieces with the vigour of village orators.

One was Wiggles, the barber, and the other Diggles, the wheelwright.

It was the night before Christmas eve, and in the parlour of the "Greyhound" extra spittoons had been placed, and extra clay pipes put on the japanned rack, and extra tin trays for the beer measures—for a goodly company was expected.

At precisely seven o'clock a wheezy old gentleman, in drab small-clothes, entered the room, and took his seat in a large, high-backed arm-chair, opposite to which was a small table, with an auctioneer's hammer on it.

He was immediately followed by a neat handmaiden, with nothing objectionable about her but her ankles, which, to say the least, were thick.

"Mary, my dear," he said, coughing a little; "you know."

Mary apparently did know, for she presently returned, and placed upon the table before the old gentleman a steaming glass of rum-and-water, at the same time kicking to him a spittoon, and handing him a pipe.

"Cold, Mr. Grumford," she said.

"Very cold—very cold, Mary. But it's Christmas weather, you know—seasonable, seasonable."

And the old gentleman took up his pipe.

Now, right before him, on the small table, was a bright brass box, and in the centre of this box was a slit, and a flat knob. Into the slit the old gentleman dropped a halfpenny, and on the knob he pressed his thumb. Half the lid of the box then flew up, and disclosed tobacco. When he had filled his pipe, he closed the lid again; and at that moment entered Wiggles the barber.

"Evenin', Mr. Grumford," said Wiggles. "A merry Christmas to you!"

"And many of 'em," replied the old gentleman, solemnly. "The same to you, say I."

Wiggles now put his halfpenny into the brass box, took out his pipe of tobacco, and then—

Enter Diggles.

Diggles approached the fire, rubbed his hands, and nodded to his friends. It was never his custom to speak till he had had something to drink.

"Shall I pull the bell for you, Diggles," said Wiggles, who liked to be busy.

Diggles nodded again.

Mary came in, and looking her steadily in the face, Diggles held up four fingers.

"One, two, three, four," said Mary. "Gin?"

Diggles nodded.

The room soon filled, for the people of Crayfield were very regular in their pleasures; and then Wiggles became talkative.

"Well, here's Christmas again!" he said, addressing no one in particular, and every one in general.

"No doubt of that," said Diggles, "at least it might be here, if it wasn't about twenty-four hours off."

"Mr. Grumford," said Wiggles, disregarding the interruption, "what do you think about these goins' on were to have?"

"Yes, I think so," replied Mr. Grumford, who was remarkably deaf.

"I say," exclaimed Diggles, "the squire's a trump!—that's what I say."

"No doubt, no doubt," said Wiggles, "but wouldn't

it be better to spend all this money in something else—say, in bibles, or prayer-books, instead of beef and buffoonery?"

"You can't eat bibles and prayer-books," returned Diggle, contemptuously.

"And you can't eat flannel petticoats!" said Wiggles, with a look of triumph!

"No, but you can wear 'em!" retorted Diggle, with a broad grin.

And for the time, he was the victor.

At this moment, Mr. Grumford rapped his small table with the auctioneer's hammer.

This signal was well understood, for it was customary in the parlour of the Greyhound to have a kind of harmonic meeting once a week, and this happened to be the night.

"Mr. Hogben will give us a song," said the chairman.

Mr. Hogben rose up, for he was a large powerful man, and liked plenty of play for his limbs when singing, and commenced something in this style:

Now, thrice welcome, Christmas,
Which brings us good cheer,
Mince pies and plum porridge,
Good ale and strong beer,
With pig, goose and capon,
The best that may be,
So well doth the weather
And our stomachs agree.

Uproarious applause greeted the conclusion of this song, after which, the company thought fit to replenish their glasses. How they finished their evening will be told in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV.

THE VISITOR TO "THE GREYHOUND."

LEAVING the roysterers, we will now take a turn outside the old Greyhound Inn. It stands opposite the church, and its creaking signboard not unfrequently disturbs the Sunday congregation when the wind is high. A somewhat narrow road divides it from the old churchyard wall, and the inscriptions on the grey leaning gravestones can be deciphered by good eyes from the tavern windows.

The Greyhound is a large, flat-fronted house, with a snug parlour on one side, and a spacious old-fashioned commercial room on the other. It is flanked by a goodly range of stables, and in front the horse-trough and the hay-basket welcome the weary roadster.

As you enter the house, you are pleasantly impressed with a sense of good cheer. Above your head, and in dangerous proximity to your hat, if you happen to be a tall man, hang ducks, geese, a ham or two, and part of a fitch of bacon. At one side of you is a glass case, on the shelves of which cold joints and poultry aggravate your appetite, and suggest lunch whether you want it or not. On the whole, the Greyhound is a good old house, and, fortunately, offers no particular advantages for a joint-stock company to turn it into a caravanserai.

Just as the auctioneer's hammer gave emphasis to the applause which followed Mr. Hogben's song, a stranger walked up to the door of the Greyhound, and for a moment paused on its hospitable threshold.

"Not much change in the old place," he said, as he looked up at the creaking signboard. "Changed hosts, though, no doubt. Let us reconnoitre."

And he looked over the half-closed shutters into the bar parlour.

He was not aware that he was watched; but a stealthy eye was upon him!

"A new landlord!" he whispered to himself.

"Well, that's fortunate."

And pushing open the swinging door, he entered.

A shambling, stealthy figure now came from behind the horse-trough, and leaning against the door-jamb, fixed upon the stranger two cunning, evil-looking eyes.

"Can I have a bed here?" inquired the traveller.

"Well, sir," replied the landlord, "I'll see."

And mine host consulted his wife.

"Have you any luggage, sir?" said the landlord, when he returned.

"No, none; at least, my luggage is at the railway station."

"At the railway station?" repeated the landlord, thoughtfully.

"Yes."

All this time the two evil eyes, peering round the door-jamb, were fixed upon the traveller.

The landlord seemed to hesitate. A stranger, without even a knapsack or a portmanteau, coming two miles from a railway station for a bed, on the very eve of Christmas, too, was a novelty.

The traveller grew impatient.

"Come, can I have a bed or not?" he asked.

"Well, yes, sir—that is, I think you can!" replied mine host. "Perhaps you will step this way."

And he led the stranger into the commercial room.

The moon was shining in through the windows, giving the great, desolate-looking room, a cold, ghostly appearance, not at all redeemed by the straight-backed chairs, of a pattern that made them seem to be standing with their arms a-kimbo, in perpetual protest against being sat upon.

The traveller shivered audibly as he contemplated the prospect, and when mine host had lighted one of the gas jets, he turned and said, as though the shudder had been a remark about the temperature:

"Yes, sir, it is cold. And, by-the-by, if you intend to remain in the house all the evening, perhaps you'd be more comfortable in the parlour, sir—that is, if you don't mind joining the company there."

"Thank you," said the stranger, "but I think I had rather remain here. I have some letters to write, and other business matters that will occupy me till bed-time. I see the materials for a fire are in the grate."

"Oh, yes, certainly, sir. I'll set light to them," returned the landlord.

And in another moment, the brushwood crackled and hissed, and a bright flame shot up the chimney.

Mine host, occupied by the gas and the fire, had not yet drawn down the blinds, and the lighted-up room and its occupants were strikingly visible to any one outside.

This chance was not neglected by the skulking watcher who seemed to take such great interest in the new arrival. He was leaning on the window-sill and staring with all his might at the stranger.

"Dang me, if I don't know 'nu!" he muttered, "and he don't come here for no good! I'll pay me to go to Measter Markham about this."

And he shambled off in the direction of the stables.

Unconscious of all this, the traveller sat down by the fire, and looking steadily at the bright embers, appeared absorbed in thought.

The landlord pulled down the blinds, turned on another gas jet or two, shifted a chair into its place, put the local paper on the table by his guest's side.—then rubbing his hands, said:

"Capital Christmas weather, sir!"

"Yes," replied the stranger, still staring at the fire.

"I suppose, sir, you'll take some supper?"

"Supper!—ah, yes."

"And shall I bring you anything now?"

"Nothing, thank you,—yet stay, pen, ink, and paper."

Mine host left the room, and presently reappeared with the writing materials. He then saw that the stranger had taken up the local newspaper, and was devouring some particular paragraph with avidity.

The paragraph was to the following effect:

"We believe we are not premature in announcing to our readers that the ordinary festivities of Christmas will this year be considerably heightened by a marriage in which the county must necessarily be deeply interested. The only son of Mr. Vincent Markham, of the 'Gables,' Crayfield, is, we are privileged to mention, about to lead to the hymeneal altar a young lady already nearly related to him, his cousin, Miss Agnes Markham, only daughter of John Markham, deceased. This happy event is expected to take place on an early day during the Christmas holidays."

There were further felicitations in the paragraph; but the stranger saw little after that word "deceased." He dropped the paper, buried his face in his hands, and when he again looked at the fire, his eyes were wet with tears.

"Deceased!" he muttered. "And does she know—has she seen this? Is this the justice that they say God metes out to us!"

Then he started up, and rang the bell.

"Landlord, let me have some brandy!"

When the brandy was brought, he took a great gulp, and sat down to the writing materials.

He was interrupted now and then by the catches and songs that were roared out from the parlour; for, as the time wore away, and the glasses were replenished, the mirth grew fast and furious. Mr. Hogben's strong lungs were again in requisition, as he bellowed out the following:

Not a man here shall taste my beer;
Till a Christmas carol he does sing,
Then all clasp their hands, and shouted and sung,
'Till the hall and the parlour did ring.

And truly the parlour did ring when the singer sat down and the auctioneer's hammer rapped as though set going by steam.

The traveller had finished his writing, and was listening dreamily to the uproar, when two tall and powerful looking men entered the house, and stood in front of the bar. The stealthy figure who had devoted so much attention to the stranger, shambled in after them, and a glance, apparently of mutual understanding, passed between the three.

"You've a lively party here, landlord," said one of the new-comers, "at least for these quiet parts."

"Yes," returned the host, somewhat uneasily, "very lively."

"And all, I suppose, farmers about here, and that like, keeping Christmas a day or two in advance."

"My usual customers," said the landlord, coldly.

"In that room?" asked the second of the new-comers.

"You can't mistake *where* it is," exclaimed the other, laughing.

"And about *this* room? I don't hear much singing in there."

And he pointed to the commercial room.

The landlord grew suspicious.

"Perhaps," he said, a little puzzled, "you'd like to see for yourselves. I keep open house."

"Well, perhaps we should."

And pushing the door quickly open, they entered the room.

The traveller started a little, as they appeared, and looked at them curiously. They noticed that he thrust one hand into an inner pocket of his coat.

However, after nodding to him, and saying something about the weather, they sat down, and commenced conversation; first calling for two "strong glasses"—those were their words—of rum and water.

The rum-and-water came in, and turning to the stranger, they said, almost in a breath.

"Your health, sir," to which one of them added, "and a merry Christmas!"

The stranger lifted his glass to his lips, and regarding his new companions steadily, replied:

"And a merry Christmas to you."

But one hand was still kept close in his breast pocket!

An oppressive silence followed, in the midst of which came a short, sharp sound.

"Click!"

It was the cocking of a pistol!

It should be explained that the stranger sat at an angle of the fireplace facing the door, with a table at his left hand, while opposite to him, at the other side of the fire, and necessarily at some little distance, sat the two new-comers. They could have no reasonable excuse for passing behind him.

Suddenly, however, one of them, looking rapidly at his companion, and pointing to a coloured print on the wall at the further end, rose and walked towards it, saying:

"Why, that's the winner of last year's Derby!"

The stranger sat perfectly still, but followed the movement closely with his ear, while keeping his eyes fixed on the man opposite to him. It happened, too, that a long, narrow mirror let into the wall near the door reflected the winner of the Derby and its admirer.

The game of strategy was thus rendered a little more equal.

What the stranger saw in the mirror may be easily imagined; for, starting up, his head struck against a pair of handcuffs, and knocking the table over on to the man that held them, he rushed at the other, and with a well-directed blow, sent him sprawling on the ground.

The two men, however, were up in a second, and reached the door of the room, just as the stranger had dashed through.

The sound of this affray startled the roysterers in the parlour, and tumbling out, one after the other, with the alarmed landlord at their head, they saw a man, with a pistol in his hand, leap the churchyard wall, and after turning once to look at his pursuers, disappear in the deep shadows cast by the old church!

(To be continued.)

It is stated that within two days of Menotti Garibaldi's arrival at Nice, he received from the French authorities notice to quit immediately.

It has been calculated that over two millions will be the amount of ready money at the disposal of the Marquis of Bute on his coming of age. The marquis is in his sixteenth year, and at Eton.

FRANCIS CORFINI, late of the Polish cavalry, was captured in the village of Klubeck, where the Russians committed the usual atrocities, plundering the estate, murdering two of the inhabitants, beating the village priest in a terrible manner, and drinking spirits out of the chalices on the altar of the church. Corfini was taken to Wloclawsk, and tortured at his examination before the infamous Schwartz, aide-de-camp to Prince Wittgenstein. The prisoner kept silence notwithstanding his sufferings, but at length, provoked beyond endurance, he spat in Schwartz's face and exclaimed, "The time will soon come when you, too, will suffer for all your crimes!" Schwartz, in a fury, immediately ordered Corfini to be beaten with rods, and the punishment was prolonged until the victim lost all consciousness, his back being quite broken. He was then taken to the gibbet and bound to it for several hours. This was repeated for four days in succession, after which he was hanged. Corfini preserved his self-possession to the last.

CLICKETY-CLACK.

Any person who has visited one of our immense cotton-factories will appreciate "The Weaver's Song." Well do we remember ascending from the lower even to the seventh story of one of these immense establishments; and when, after a survey of some two hours' duration, the buzz of the spindles, and the 'clickety-clack' of the looms, filled our ears for the entire day,

Clickety-clack! the shuttle flies,
Clickety-clack—the wheels go round;
Clickety-clack—my weary ears
Are deaf to every other sound.

Clickety-clack! the cock doth crow:
Clickety-clack—he calls not me;
Clickety-clack—an hour or so
I've been at work, ere waketh he.

Clickety-clack! the sun rides high,
Clickety-clack—all through the day,
Clickety-clack—my truant eye
Doth covet but one blessed ray.

Clickety-clack! the sun is west,
Clickety-clack—the sun has set;
Clickety-clack—though others rest,
My time of toiling ends not yet.

Clickety-clack! the lamps are lit,
Clickety-clack—and yet the strife;
Clickety-clack—the shuttles flit,
Weaving up threads of cotton and life.

Clickety-clack! I go to my bed,
Clickety-clack—it follows me there;
Clickety-clack—my feverish head
Keeps weaving all night on a loom of air.

Clickety-clack! an endless round,
Clickety-clack—a steady stream;
Clickety-clack—I always confound
My daily task with my nightly dream.

Clickety-clack! since life begun,
Clickety-clack—until 'tis said:
'Clickety-clack—the work is done!
Her web is woven—cut the thread!"

H. H.

MAN AND HIS IDOL.

CHAPTER LXXV.

SPY AND COUNTER SPY.

Say I have been arrested suddenly.

Browning.

MARK ALLARDYCE taken for murder!

There were two persons who heard the news with feelings not to be described—with wild, despairing horror that found no expression in words.

How could language express the unutterable anguish of his mother, that noble woman whose love had been proof against his scorn, his wickedness, his contempt? That mother who knew him bad, desperately bad, yet clung to him through all? That mother who knew herself despised, who felt that her idolatry of her first-born degraded her—yes, the truth must out, degraded her—yet who would not, could not, turn against him?

Think of the countess's position!

This charge brought home against her son would free her husband from the suspicion which hung upon him like a blight.

She knew it, saw it clearly, saw also what her duty was, and knew that, with feelings rightly schooled, she ought to have rejoiced at this calamity.

Ah, it is easy to take the stern moralist's view, and to dictate what should be the right feelings of a mother, to lay down how she ought to have rejoiced in the vindication of innocence, and in the conviction of guilt, even if her own son was the victim. Easy indeed; but the answer to the moralist lies in one word. *She was his mother!*

Yes, talk of idol-worship, man never regarded woman with the blind, unreasoning idolatry with which a mother regards her son. Deformed in body and in mind he may be: utterly vicious, utterly repulsive, but he is her son; the loved darling whom she has nourished from her own breast, and upon whom there rests for ever the glory of her undying affection.

When they brought the intelligence to her ladyship, she heard it, every word of it, without comment. She only stood aghast, her features rigid, her hands clasped as if bands of steel bound them together.

She could not cry out, she could not weep.

As if stricken by palsy, she dropped in the seat by which she had been standing, her head drooped, and her hands, relaxing their rigidity, dropped by her side.

Those who had brought the fatal news respected the mother's horror, and stood mutely aside. Presently the earl entered.

"Gertrude," he said, "this is sad news."

She only shook her head mournfully from side to side, she did not speak.

Terrified at the spectacle of the mother's despair, he sat down by her side, took her hands in his, and waited patiently for what should follow.

"God, how she loved that bound!" was his mental exclamation.

But it did not shape itself into words. The earl loved his countess. He could not find it in his heart to pain her even by a syllable, much as he might justly have felt.

The attendants, moved even to tears by the sad spectacle, withdrew, and left them sitting side by side.

Almost at the same moment, Flora Angerstein was sitting at breakfast in the exquisitely appointed rooms which her mother and herself occupied while in London.

In spite of the unfavourable aspect of affairs, Flora breakfasted well. She drank her French chocolate from a large Sevres-china cup with manifest gusto, and a cold pheasant did not tempt her appetite in vain.

It was Mrs. Angerstein's usual morning task to read the papers, which she devoured with avidity, and to pick out such "bits" as she knew would suit her daughter's taste. Those she read aloud. When very angry, Flora had more than once said that her mother acquired the habit as her father's slave, and that, as her father's property descended to his children, so she owed her own daughter the same duty, and must fulfil it. However that might have been, this invariably formed her morning task.

On this particular morning the papers were unusually dull. Mrs. Angerstein strove in vain to interest her child, and that spoiled tiger-like beauty was annoyed and insulting.

"You see nothing, understand nothing!" she said. "You are old and imbecile. You wouldn't fetch a hundred dollars in the only country in the world free enough to deal in human cattle."

"Miserable girl!" exclaimed the outraged mother; "what is it you say? Take care, take care! I may forget I am your mother!"

Her eyes blazed up and her face was white with sudden anger.

"I'm not likely to forget it, unfortunately," sneered Flora. "You've set a brand on me that I shall carry to my grave. But I'm in no mood for wrangling; I want to be amused, not irritated. Amuse me."

With a spasmodic effort the poor slave-mother swallowed her resentment, and, taking up the paper which had fallen, held it in her trembling hands. For a time she could not see, the print was blurred by the tears that crept into her eyes. When the mists at length cleared away, she uttered a cry of astonishment.

Flora looked up alarmed.

"What is it?" she asked.

"Here, see here! 'The supposed murder at Galescombe! Arrest of a suspected murderer!'"

Flora snatched the paper from her mother's hands, and her eyes fastened upon the paragraph as if fascinated by the words, which yet, in the first onset, seemed to shock rather than to convey any definite meaning to her mind.

"Merciful Heaven!" she gasped at length; "it is not possible! Mark taken—Mark charged with murder! How has this come about?"

"Mark, my dear! do you mean Captain Allardyce?" asked Mrs. Angerstein, innocently.

"Who else should I mean?" demanded the wilful beauty, impetuously, at the same time rising and pacing the room. "Oh, Mark, Mark, why did you not trust me? Why did you not confess all and let me save you? I guessed it all, and now it is too late, too late!"

She clasped her small, soft hands above her shining, thrown-back head, and walked to and fro with the action of a despairing, desperate woman.

Mrs. Angerstein looked on in amazement.

She had never seen Flora thus moved.

"But, my dear," she said, in her quiet way, "why should you put yourself out so much about the young man?"

"Why?"

She stopped and gnashed out the word with impatient sharpness.

"Yes, my dear," murmured the woman, "he's not pleasant to speak to, and not very good-looking, and down at Redruth they gave him an awful character. Awful!"

She raised both her hands from her knees to give due emphasis to the last words.

Flora, sweeping across the room, caught one of those hands in a fierce, relentless grip.

"Silence, mother!" she cried, as if in her agony the word so seldom used was wrung from her lips.

"Silence! Can't you see that your words torture me? Can't you understand yet?"

"Understand what, my child?"

"Why, that I love this man! I love him. I do!"

have never felt my pulse quicken for any human being, have given my heart to this reprobate. I tell you this, because I must tell some one. I must speak out my secret, or it will kill me. But take care, not a word of this to any living soul. Dare to hint it, and I won't answer for what may follow."

"But why, my dear, why this secrecy? Doesn't he return your love?"

"Return it!" Flora burst out, "what! Do you think I have told him of it! Do you think me the woman to degrade herself by admitting her weakness to the object of it, and pleading to him to love her? Oh, if I thought he but suspected that I—I, his superior in everything, was so weak, so mad, so infatuated—great Heaven if I thought that! I wouldn't raise a finger to save him from any death they might doom him to! In that death there would at least be an end to my shame."

Accustomed as she was to her daughter's violent paroxysms of strong feeling, Mrs. Angerstein had never seen her so moved as on this day. The admission of her weakness and need of sympathy, even to her mother, showed how completely the passion, to which she was a victim, had convulsed her very nature. The mother's strong impulse was to throw her arms about the neck of her child, and to offer words of consolation and pity. But she knew Flora too well. As well might she have attempted to soothe a chafing leopard with tears; and as for words of pity, they would have fallen on Flora's ears like drops of burning acid on a wound. To be pitied, was, in her eyes, the lowest stage of human degradation.

Like a tropical storm, the outburst of feeling to which this strange woman had yielded, soon passed over. Her quick, cunning, restless brain seized on the materials of the newspaper paragraph, and set to work at the practical question of how the threatened evil was to be counteracted.

What could she do?

That was the question which shaped itself in her mind. By what exercise of craft or audacity could she aid Mark in cheating the gallows?

Her first step was to seek out her brother, Thaddeus.

From his lips she again heard the details of what passed at the police-station in Lower Street, when Thaddeus failed so lamentably in securing the papers which Mark regarded as of so much importance.

Having heard all, Flora reflected.

"Is this woman dangerous in herself?" she asked, "or simply in connection with others? That it is to her we owe all this misery is clear; but in which way?"

A little thought convinced her that the peril did not lie in what Lotty knew of her own knowledge. Clearly she could not have seen the murder committed, it was very improbable that Mark should have engaged her as an accomplice, and her power must, Flora felt, be in those mysterious papers, or in association with accomplices.

Now, to seek to regain possession of the papers was hopeless, and from the description Thaddeus gave of them, Flora was not inclined to think that they bore on this charge. The point, therefore, was to ascertain who Lotty was in league with, and to cut off communication with them at all hazards.

This was best done by setting a spy upon the woman, and the important, but not very honourable office, was entrusted to Mark's own servant, the astute Joe Leech. His instructions were to set himself upon Lotty's track and not lose sight of her, night or day, and also to take notes of every house she might enter, every person she addressed, every letter she posted, and so forth.

Joe's first report, confirmed Flora's suspicions as to the danger to be apprehended from Lotty. She had in a few hours been most active. She had visited Sergeant Goss, Mr. Abernethy Plunkett, and Frank Hildred, and as the spy reported, she had just sent for a cab to the door of a public-house in which she had dined, to take her to King's Cross Station. Joe added that he had "stood a pint" to the unsuspicious cabby, who was going to let him ride on the box to the same destination.

This report was sent by a street *commissionaire* to Flora at four o'clock in the afternoon. Next morning at ten, Mark was to be brought up. There were the intervening hours to act in.

"Of course," said Flora, "she is gone to Galescombe. The danger lies in that quarter, then. There are three return trains to-night (she consulted her pocket-book for this information as she spoke); Joe might miss her by the one she takes, and if it should so happen that she brings anyone back with her, his oversight might ruin all. I will be at the station myself."

It was fortunate that she came to this resolve, or her plans would have been greatly frustrated, and there was no time for blundering or delay. That night Mark must be saved or lost.

And it happened that in spite of Joe Leech's cunning, he had been outwitted. Galescombe was but a village, and it was very difficult for two persons to be in it

for any time without running against each other. Now, Lotty on reaching the place, had gone at once into the Redruth Arms, where she found that the rumour of Mark's arrest for the murder was already creating the utmost excitement. While speaking to Mrs. Lattice at the bar, she chanced to raise her eyes towards the window, and in doing so, detected the passing face of Joe Leech.

Lotty knew that face in an instant, and, perhaps from something in the manner of the spy, the conviction flashed into her mind that she was watched.

Almost at the same moment, Nathan Lee, the poacher, who had so freely spoken his mind to Mark Allardyce, lounged in, a short, black pipe in his mouth, and both hands far down in his pockets. He did not appear to know or to notice Lotty. Nevertheless he moved in the direction in which she was standing, and, having got near her, leant both his elbows on the bar-counter, and ordered some liquor.

Mrs. Lattice, the landlady, drew it for him, and then fell into conversation with Lotty.

While this went on, Lotty dipped the point of her gloved finger in a ring formed on the bar-counter by the beer from Lee's pint-pot, and, in a listless, indifferent way, wrote several words on the bar.

One of those words was "watched."

Nathan Lee gave a nudge with his elbow, unperceived by the company, to intimate that he understood:

"Going back by the next train, miss?" asked Mrs. Lattice with an unpleasant stress on the "miss."

"Yes," replied the girl.

In doing so, she pressed her foot upon the toe of one of Lee's clumsy ankle-jacks; at the same time, with the same listless, unconcerned manner, she traced with the finger of her glove another word on the pewter bar. It was the word "groom." Lee understood that also, and expressed his intelligence in the same way.

"Short stay, miss?" remarked the inquisitive landlady.

"Yes: I only dropped down to see a friend," was the answer.

"Oh, indeed!" cried Mrs. Lattice, wondering what friends such a person could have made in Galescombe, but not daring to put the inquiry into so many words.

"Your clock is fast, isn't it?" asked Lotty, looking up at the old-fashioned clock in the brown case in the corner of the bar.

"Only a few minutes."

"Then I've not much time to lose? I must be off to the train at once."

The stress on the last words, and an unperceived nudge at Nathan Lee's arm, served as a hint to him, which he at once took, and drinking up his beer departed.

Lotty lingered a few minutes. Talked of the cold, and the fog, and the dirty roads, anything to fill up the time. But whatever was talked of in the bar of the Redruth that night all tended in the end to the one subject—the taking of Captain Allardyce for the murder.

How it had come about, was the mystery which troubled everybody. What had diverted suspicion from the earl to his son-in-law, no one could understand. That it should be so, seemed a satisfactory arrangement to everyone, for the earl was loved and honoured, and Mark had always been unpopular; but the secret of the new state of things puzzled them.

Had Lotty chosen, what a flood of light she could have thrown upon the darkness in which those simple, honest folks groped their way!

And how little did they suspect that this despised outcast, for so she was morally and socially, held in her hands the strings that moved the puppets of this Drama of Destiny.

It was late when Lotty reached the station, the bell had rung, the train was on the point of departure. Going on to the platform, she looked hastily round. No one there? Yes: Nathan Lee, with his hands in his pockets, leant against the door of the waiting-room, idly, and apparently without a purpose.

Lotty walked up, not seeming to notice him, but as she passed, he drew his right hand out of his pocket and pointed to a particular carriage, with his thumb, interpreting this signal, she passed on, and in doing so, went by the window of the waiting-room. At that window, an eager face was peering out, the face of clever, cunning, Joe Leech. Directly she had passed he rushed to the door, intending to dart out; but to his astonishment he found it locked.

Was it possible? No; he would not credit it. The door could only "hang." So with hands and feet, and the weight of his whole body, he strove to bear it open.

Through the window, he saw that the train was on the move.

The sight maddened him. He shouted, screamed, and renewed his attack on the door. Nathan Lee, without moving a muscle of his stern face, reached his

hand out, and quietly turned the key in the lock. As Joe Leech tugged at the handle, with one last, despairing effort, the door flew open, and he fell back with a force that half-stunned him. At the same time, Lee dashed into the room, and bending over, clenched his fist, ready to deal a murderous blow if the fellow dared to rise.

"Let me go! How dare you?" gasped the astonished Joe. "I shall lose the train. It's off!"

"It is," said Nathan Lee, quietly dropping his hands, and thrusting them into his pockets.

"You infernal scoundrel!" yelled the young man, scrambling to his feet; "you've ruined me!"

"No, sure."

"But I say you have. What's your little game? Here's my misus gone off in this train —"

"Never mind," said Lee with a half-smile, "She's all right. She ain't gone alone."

Joe Leech looked utterly aghast at those words. And well he might. He had been outwitted, and the mischief he had been sent to prevent was done.

CHAPTER LXXVI.

THE THIRD PERSON IN THE CAB.

Who, spectro-wise, crosses our path and spreads

Confusion by an unseen presence? Who?

Li Cai.

FLORA ANGERSTEIN was not a woman to throw away a chance; so, while she waited at the terminus, the idea occurred to her that she might as well avail herself of the telegraph-office there, to communicate with Lord Sandown.

She counted his lordship as an ally, and it was necessary at this crisis to bring all her forces into the field. If Mark was to be saved, it could only be by a bold, determined, and, if necessary, criminal effort.

That he should be saved she had determined.

The telegram was very brief. It simply asked him to meet her at a time and at a place which she had named. The time was eight o'clock—the place, a private boarding-house in Great Queen-street.

Having done this, there was nothing for her but to curb her impatience until the arrival of the train. It seemed an endless time coming, and when the time at which it was due had really past, and still it did not come, waiting seemed endless and hopeless. One thought alone flashed, sudden and evanescent, across her dark mind.

"If there should have been an accident?" she mentally ejaculated. "That woman killed and he must be saved! To think that a poor miserable wretch like that should stand between him and me! Oh, if she could be killed, crushed, annihilated!"

The impious wish had hardly escaped this terrible woman's lips, before the sound of a shrieking whistle came from down the line, and slowly and stealthily the train stole up to where she stood.

Flora's eyes were on the alert for Joe Leech.

Although she had taken the precaution of coming there herself, as much from restless anxiety as from prudence, perhaps, it did not occur to her as at all probable that her spy would not be upon the trail of his victim. But a sharp, hurried examination of the passengers who alighted showed her that he had not come. Far from suspecting the cause of this, her idea was that Lotty also had waited until the next train. Nothing was more probable, nor could anything be well more annoying. Until the woman returned to London, all was doubt and uncertainty. Her visit to Galescombe was a mystery, its object could hardly be surmised; and, yet, coming on the eve of Mark's examination, it was natural to suppose that it had something to do with it.

Supposing Lotty to have arrived alone, Flora's great difficulty lay in this, that she only knew the woman by description. It was probable, therefore, that she might pass her unrecognized, and so defeat all her plans.

Matters did not exactly take this turn.

While lingering amidst the crowd, eyeing each passenger with intense scrutiny, Flora, chancing to turn, found herself face to face with Frank Hildred.

The meeting was singularly awkward and ill-timed. Flora knew the part Hildred was taking with his friend Meredith, not purposely against her, though really so, and was quite aware of his object in coming to the terminus. On his part, Hildred, who never could meet this woman without a strange perturbation of feeling, at once surmised that Flora's presence there boded no good to the cause he was pledged to serve.

Both thought of Lotty; neither mentioned her.

The eyes of both wandered nervously up and down the platform, eager to recognize the face of the expected woman, yet alike doubtful what course to pursue on seeing her.

Flora's fertile brain was the first to suggest a way out of the difficulty.

"Frank," she said, in her soft, fawning voice, and

without letting go the hand he had offered her on their meeting, "are we still friends, or enemies?"

"Enemies, Flora?"

The very idea jarred upon his sensitive heart—the heart in which this woman was an enshrined idol.

"Oh, I didn't know," she returned, in her childish, innocent way; "everything is so changed. This dreadful charge against St. Omer's son has estranged everybody, and I didn't know but that you —"

A serious expression stole over Frank's face, in spite of himself.

"As Meredith's oldest friend," he said, "I am naturally interested in what concerns him."

"And does this dreadful business concern him?" asked Flora artlessly.

"A little—that is, you know—the same woman who gives evidence against Captain Allardyce, establishes, as it happens, Meredith's right to the earldom."

"Indeed!" she said.

And in her heart of hearts she thought: "If I can but destroy her, then, I can serve two ends; save Mark, and perhaps, the property also." But she did not allow this murderous thought even to cloud her brow.

"That is the simple truth," said Frank.

"Then I'm afraid, oh, yes, I really am! that tonight we meet—it's very dreadful to say it, but how can I help it?—we meet as enemies!"

"Why?"

"Because as friends of the St. Omers, we naturally pity Mark and take his side."

"Well?"

"And we can't endure this dreadful woman that you are so fond of. You're not? Oh, yes, you are, Frank. You can't hide the truth from me, because I read you like a book. Why, you are come here to meet her at this very moment!"

He could not deny it.

"And I, too," she said, with an anxious tremor—"I will confess that I, too, am here to see her; I thought if I could look at her, speak to her, I might fear her less. Besides, she may not be so dreadful, after all; and if it had been possible for me to enlist you on our side, and you would have taken the trouble for me—for me, Frank!" she pressed his hand harder as she spoke, "perhaps this dreadful charge might be investigated without public exposure—eh, don't you think so?"

"It is too late," said Frank.

"At any rate, if I could see the woman and learn what evidence she is prepared to give, it might help me to ease the minds of the earl and countess, who are of course dreadfully frightened; and, at any rate, I wish to know the best and the worst."

"You shall do so," answered Frank; "here is Lotty."

Had a serpent reared its head at her side, Flora could not have shrunk from it more quickly, or regarded it with a more shivering aversion than she did the woman who stood before her.

"And this is—Lotty?" she asked.

"Yes," replied Hildred, then turning to the other woman, he said, "Miss Angerstein—you know her?"

Lotty drew back a step and fixed her bold black eyes upon the woman thus introduced.

"Know her? Yes," she said, with a fierce, malicious glance, "I know her for a false, designing, wicked woman! I know her for a treacherous, plotting, heartless devil! I've known her too well, and too long at a distance to care to come to closer quarters with her, or with any of her nigger-race."

At the first part of this speech Flora only smiled contemptuously; but the allusion to the slight taint of creole blood in her veins roused all the tiger in her. She would have sprung upon Lotty and torn her to pieces, had she dared, but the sense of all that was at stake restrained her.

As for Lotty, she turned with a gesture of infinite contempt, and sailed grandly off toward a cab which was in waiting for her. Hildred stood, uncertain how to act.

"Leave me!" cried Flora, "leave me!"

He obeyed, and with some hope of bringing about a reconciliation, made his way to the cab. Flora, instantly on the alert, saw that he followed Lotty into it, and, by the light of a lamp which shone through the cab windows, she also noticed that there was a third person seated in it.

That fact confirmed all her suspicions, and awoke in her mind a fever of alarm.

Instantly hailing another cab, she pointed out to the driver that which was fast rattling out of the terminus gates.

"Do you see that cab?" she asked.

"Yes, ma'am, Mivins's, ma'am, No. 8,349."

"Follow it! Do not lose sight of it for an instant. Your fare is a guinea a mile."

Cabby's amazement was so great that he almost lost sight of No. 8,349 before he had recovered from it. But as a sailor recognizes ships that are mere specks on the horizon, so a London cabman is never at fault

with regard to any vehicle on the ranks. So in a very few minutes the man was on the track, and did not fail or falter in his duty.

The house to which Lotty was driven was that formerly occupied by her strange friend Carry, whose proficiency in the use of slang we have had occasion to admire. Directly the cab stopped there the fact was telegraphed to Flora by her cabman, and she at once darted from the vehicle; but not in time to catch sight of those who entered the building. However, it was something to know that was the house; and that under the same roof there was at that moment the unknown enemy from whom so much was to be feared.

For ten minutes or more the Creole woman stood in the shadow of an opposite doorway and watched that house, and as she did so, there rose to her lips neither prayers nor blessings. No; but if the curses of a desperate, depraved, and well-nigh distracted woman could prevail, Lotty's state ought to have been desperate indeed.

While Flora watched, she could distinguish only two shadows on the blind of the only room in the house in which there was a light—they were both the shadows of men!

"As I feared," she muttered; "but who, in Heaven's name, who is this secret witness? I must know, and to-night. This suspense tortures me—kills me! As for that miserable drab who has dared to speak those words to me, I will never rest till I have laid her in her grave. Now, to Sandown's."

It was time to keep that eight o'clock appointment in Great Queen Street, and she was not loath to drive there. At the door of the boarding-house she dismissed the cabman, giving him as his fare a sum which kept him drunk for a week after.

Sandown had received the telegram, and was there. In spite of his drawing manner, his smoothly-parted hair, and the calmness with which he tapped his polished leather toes with his cane, he was clearly perturbed.

"I am so glad you are here!" cried Flora, impetuously.

"It was a chance, I can tell you," he drawled.

"Why?"

"London's getting precious hot for me."

"Hot?"

"Yes; there's paper enough out against me to cover St. Paul's."

Flora laughed for a second: then she said very gravely:

"So much the more reason, isn't there, that this match should come off?"

"Yes," he drawled, in return; "but it's impossible now, you know. What can I do without Mark? And the gunner, he's thrown up the idea. Fact!"

Flora seated herself on the sofa by his lordship's side, and put her hands upon his shoulder.

"Do you know what I think?" she said.

"I? No."

"I think you are glad to know of this hitch—you like being in difficulties—you would be delighted to see Mark on the drop—it would be an excitement."

Archy looked at the woman with amazement.

"I—like to see—Mark—hung!" he said, very slowly.

"Yes; or you would stir yourself to prevent it," replied Flora.

"But what can I do?" asked his lordship.

"Will you do it, if I tell you?"

"Certainly."

"You promise?"

"Yes—why not?"

On the table before them was an inkstand, and some sheets of tinted paper were scattered about. It was always the case in Flora's rooms; her correspondence was enormous, and she was nice about her stationery.

"Write as I dictate," she said, dipping a pen in the ink, and giving it to him. "My dear Lotty—"

"What! you expect me to write to her? After our quarrel, and her threats too? You are mad. She will tear my letter into atoms, and only insult me in reply."

Flora did not deign an answer. She went on with her dictation, and Sandown mechanically wrote. This was the note:

"MY DEAR LOTTY,—I have been a brute to you, a right-down brute, knowing as I do all your love and tenderness toward me, and the promises I have so often made that nothing should part us."

"Since that fatal day when my perverse temper got the better of me I have been most unhappy."

"Can you, will you, forgive me? Can you find it in your heart to forget the past, and all the cruelty I have used, and like a true, good, dear soul, as you are, take me back into your good graces. I promise to be very penitent and very good, and to love you better than ever—if that is possible."

"Say 'Yes,' for God's sake, Lotty, for I'm a miserable, heart-broken dog."

"If you will use that sweet word let me hear it from your own lips, my dear, dear girl, this very night; I will be here from eight till eleven—I cannot stay later. Come, pray come!"

"Your loving, repentant, despairing lover,"

"ARCHY."

"And you mean to say I'm to lower myself by addressing such a letter as that to a ——" Archy couldn't think of a word expressive enough for his taste.

"Add the address of this house," said Flora.

The other obeyed. Then the letter was folded and directed.

"Good!" cried Flora, as she waved it in her hand. "If this does not decoy her, nothing will. Once here, you can tell how far she will listen to reason. If she's not to be moved even by you, or if she feels that she has gone too far, there is, thank God, one other resource."

"And that is?"

"We will talk of it by-and-bye."

And with a short laugh and a sinister, mocking smile, Flora Angerstein quitted the house, leaving Sandown with a nervous, uncomfortable feeling, for which he could hardly account.

CHAPTER LXXVII

DANGEROUS WORK.

The hour was late: the fire burned low,
Far off the village clock struck one.

Longfellow.

FOILED as he had been in his endeavours to gain possession of the papers on which Kingston Meredith founded his claims, and which, for all he knew, might bear on the subject of the murder also, Thaddeus Angerstein did not quite despair of laying hands on them.

He argued that when Lotty was discharged, in the absence of a prosecutor, they would have been returned to her, or, it was possible they might have found their way into the hands of Kingston Meredith. In either case there was, he persuaded himself, no great difficulty in seizing or destroying them.

"If a house or two had to go with them," he reflected, "it would make a blaze and wouldn't hurt me."

He was a philosopher, you see, when other people's interests were concerned, and the philosophy which teaches us to bear the misfortunes of others lightly, is not difficult to practise. Most of us have found that. It is the trouble which comes home to ourselves which seems so much heavier than all the rest of the trouble in the world, and few of us are either philosophers enough or Christians enough to bear that without a murmur.

An accidental circumstance led Thaddeus to suspect that the important papers might have found their way into the hands of Mr. Abernethy Plunkett. Clearly he was engaged in getting up the cases, civil and criminal, which were now pending, and nothing was more likely than that the documentary evidence should have been entrusted to him.

Turning this matter over in his mind, Thaddeus recollected that the name of this acute lawyer had been mentioned to him by a young fellow whom he sometimes met at a billiard-room which he frequented, and who was known among the players there as "Raby."

This Raby was a fast man of a common type, loud in his dress, loud in his talk, a braggart and boaster, but not a bad fellow at heart, it was said; though, probably, the quantity of heart, like that of intellect, allotted to him had been but small.

Raby played indifferently, and was constantly being "picked up" by the knowing. Raby betted and lost. Raby "did the grand" in a general and expensive way, and to very little purpose. He called himself an attorney—people knew instinctively that he was a lawyer's clerk, and those who won his money laughed at him and his pretensions behind his back.

Thaddeus had never laughed at Raby.

It was not the man's policy to laugh at anybody. He flattered and toadied, and made friends all round—for it was an article of his philosophic creed that a lion might need the aid of a mouse, some day or other. And in respect to Raby, he had won the man's little heart by giving him at times a rousing "tip," on which he afterwards declared he had made "a pot of money." Whether he had done so or not Thaddeus couldn't tell. His belief was that the amount was exaggerated. But the man's gratitude for the small favour convinced him of one thing, namely, that Raby was in difficulties, and a needy man was always acceptable to Thaddeus. His experience had shown him that when a man keeps up a sham position, and is worried for money, he will do anything, and will be guilty of acts which, in another, he will pronounce unpardonable.

It had happened that in a moment of genial con-

fidence, Raby had admitted to Thaddeus that he was "Plunkett's managing man," on which he had set him down as probably one of his clerks. But even this might, he now felt, be a position of some usefulness, and he set off in search of the young fellow at the billiard-rooms.

Raby was there playing pyramids, and losing.

His appearance was magnificent. The cut of his trousers was the envy of all the humbler "cads" in the room; he wore the "newest thing" in waistcoats; his coat was off, but you see he wore a spun-silk shirt of magenta in colour, fastened with carbuncle studs; his boots, too, were marvels of shape and polish. But Thaddeus noticed two things. He saw that though Raby still wore his elaborate gold and platinum chain across his chest, he never took out his gold watch, from which he concluded that the chain ended in an empty pocket, and that there was no watch to take out. The other fact was that Raby had an anxious, careworn look about the eyes, which said, as plainly as spoken words, that his mind was *à l'état* as case.

"Ah, Raby, my boy," said Thaddeus, as the game finished, "losing again?"

"Hang it, yes!" cried the young fellow; "I can't think what the deuce has come to my luck."

You will observe that people who cannot make a decent stroke, except in their own conceit, always talk a deal about their luck, as if chance ever was, or could be, a match for science.

"Why don't you cut it for a time?" asked Thaddeus.

"Cut it?" The words evidently struck upon an idea in the man's mind which he did not wish to express, and he started, but recovering himself, said, "Oh, you mean leave off playing?"

"Of course I do. What else could I mean?"

His eyes were fixed upon those of Raby, and he seemed to question his very soul.

"Oh, nothing, nothing, of course," faltered the young man. "Very foolish of me. The fact is, old fellow, between you and me, I can't afford to leave off just now, nor yet to go on at this rate."

"Indeed! Overrun the constable a bit, eh?"

"A bit? Beyond a bit, I can tell you. But there, I musn't talk of it!"

And he chalked the end of his cue with a desperation that broke the chalk in two, and crumbled it in his fingers.

"You're at Plunkett's, I think?" asked Angerstein, abruptly.

Raby looked at him for a moment, as if to satisfy himself that he had not been making a confidant of a dangerous man—a detective, or a bailiff, for example. The smile on the other's face reassured him.

"Yes," he said, "at present."

"Why, you're not going to leave?"

"No; not if —"

He stopped abruptly. Thaddeus leaned forward and whispered in his ear.

"Not if those little defalcations can be squared up, eh?" he said.

Raby turned as white as a sheet, and the cue trembled in his hand.

"What do you know?" he whispered, gasping as he did so.

"Oh, it's all right," said Thaddeus, with a reassuring slap on the shoulder. "you've gone the pace a little too fast. All young fellows do it. You've made free with 'petty cash,' perhaps, or made a mistake in a figure somewhere, or signed the governor's name instead of your own in a fit of abstraction. Something of the sort, I dare say. There's nothing in it."

Raby trembled nevertheless. Nay, he shivered, and his teeth chattered, and his tongue seemed to have suddenly lost all moisture, and to rattle in his mouth as he tried to speak.

"How did you get hold of this?" he contrived to say, at length.

"Never mind. Come! Let's go and take a glass in the private room. There isn't a soul there."

Raby could not help obeying, even if he had felt the slightest inclination to do so, and slipping on his admirably-built jacket, from the pocket of which peeped the corner of an exquisitely-scented handkerchief, he accompanied Thaddeus as proposed.

The interview was a long one.

In the course of it several glasses of brandy-and-water were consumed, and when it was over, the two men shook hands as cordially as if they had been bosom friends for years. Raby was a little thick in his voice, a little unsteady in his legs; but Thaddeus was like a rock.

"The idiot!" he said to himself, as he leant over the banisters and watched Raby down-stairs and out of the house. "To think that a man should run his neck into a noose for a fever dream! Can't he see that whether we succeed or fail, we must ruin him in self-preservation?"

As the result of this interview, Raby did not present himself at the billiard-rooms on the night after it took place.



[MR. PLUNKETT THINKS "LESS AND LESS" OF THE CASE.]

That was the night preceding the first examination of Mark Allardye, and the reason for his non-appearance may be easily accounted for. Raby's real position in Mr. Plunkett's office was that of second clerk, and on this particular day it was noticed by all that he was unusually attentive to his duties. He did not slink out of the office once, on any pretext, not even at the hour at which he usually made his way to a sporting-paper office in Fleet Street, to see the "latest betting," as displayed on telegraphic paper, so suggestively resembling bank-notes.

His excuse was that he had been to a party over night, and was "dressed seedy," yet he did not look worse than usual. The truth was that he had his reasons for not losing sight of the office that day.

To the astonishment of the clerks, however, just before the hour at which the office usually closed, Raby suddenly vanished. He had not bidden a soul in the office "good-night"; he offered no explanation of his going; but when it occurred to some one that he was not at his desk, the clerks noticed that his hat and coat had likewise disappeared.

"What's the matter with Raby to-day?" asked the chief clerk of a subordinate.

"Don't know. Hope he isn't going to hook it," was the reply, and the office understood its significance well enough, for all suspected that he had lived at a rate exceeding his income, and must have obtained the means from some suspicious source.

However, the subject passed over. The hour for closing the clerks' office came. The young men went, and the premises were left in darkness, except that Mr. Plunkett still remained in his office, in which there was a brightly-burning lamp, and a blazing fire. Plunkett himself had been "particularly engaged" all day.

He continued so up to this time, his attention being absorbed by the study of an old pedigree, a copy of the "Peerage and Baronetage," and a pile of dusty law-books, and sundry scraps of yellow, dirty-looking paper, which lay on the desk before him.

At eight o'clock there was a ring at the office-bell. Plunkett himself went out and admitted his visitor.

It was Kingston Meredith. The lawyer shook him by the hand, but his greeting was not very cordial.

"Well," asked the young man, eagerly, "what do you think of the case now?"

"Less and less," Plunkett stammered.

"You've not found any fresh difficulties?"

"No; the original one was enough. As you know well enough, the first marriage of the Earl Rupert must be proved before the descendants of the sons born to him by his first wife can oust the children under the second marriage."

Now, we have no proof of that first marriage. Old Aaron Greggson's statement in writing that he witnessed the marriage is no doubt sufficient to satisfy your mind or my mind, but the statement was not made on oath and not witnessed—these par-parsons are so unbusiness-like, consequently there is no legal proof whatever."

"Only one link wanting, one little link!" cried Meredith, "but where?—how is it to be supplied?"

"Ah, that's the question my boy," returned Plunkett, "but there is one point we have in our favour, we have attacked the other side boldly and confidently, and they neither know nor suspect our weak point. Now, one object with you is to put off the marriage of the earl's daughter with Lord Sandown, and that at least we shall accomplish. I've done enough already to frighten the Duke of Hereford from his bargain, and so far, you are the ga-gainer, if we keep still tongues in our heads."

"Which we assuredly shall," answered Meredith.

"True, and that being so, it is impossible that the truth can ooze out so as to reach the duke's ears. Though if it did, de-depend on it he would keep the earl to his bargain, for he is as hungry as a pike after money. Well, as I was saying, we put off the marriage to which you have so strong an opposition, and meanwhile it will be necessary for a fresh search to be made for this marriage certificate. I would advise that we should ourselves send to Montreaux and have the registers searched again. It is just possible that the work may have been imperfectly done, especially as you had no exact date to give your friend Leon Marne; with the dates of the births of the children before us we can now guess to a nicety the time, and the work will not be thrown away."

Meredith concurred in this.

"I've a young fellow in my office," continued Plunkett, "Raby, my second clerk, who's a good French scholar, and has lived in France in his youth. He's rather wild, but will work when he likes, and work well. This is just the task to suit him, and I would suggest that he be sent over at once."

"He can be trusted?" asked Meredith, cautiously.

"In such a case, yes, absolutely."

"Be it so, then. Ah, what was that?"

The exclamation was drawn from him by a sound as of something falling. Apparently the sound was in the room, but as both started up and looked round, nothing seemed disturbed.

The lawyer was the first to resume his seat, and he did so with a laugh.

"It was only a book falling," he said. "I daresay

some of those care-careless fellows of mine left a ledger open in the short-hand room."

"And where is that?" asked the other.

"Oh, I see," was the reply, "I must let you into one of the secrets of my office. Adjoining this room is a little closet, in which I have sometimes found it necessary to place a short-hand writer when conversations of importance were going on in this room."

"We could be overheard then?"

"Yes; if there was anybody in that closet, but my chief clerk has the key of it, and he and the rest have left the office for hours."

Meredith was satisfied, but felt uneasy at the bare idea of what mischief a spy in that closet might do.

The conversation reverted to the proposed examination of the register, and the proposed arrangement as to Montreaux was determined on.

"And now," said Meredith, "about this still more important matter, the examination of Mark Allardye for the murder of Daniel Kingston—is all prepared?"

"All is under weigh."

"But, Lotty; where is she?"

"Gone to Galescombe for the principal witness. By the way, it is getting late. They should be here by this time."

"You expect both here?"

"Both."

"I will wait then. Important as my own business is, I feel that duty compels me also to strain every nerve to effect the conviction of the real murderer of poor Kingston, and I may add, his child also, since but for the persecution to which she was exposed she might have been among us now alive and happy."

They waited.

Slowly the time crept on, every pulse marked by the loud obtrusive ticking of the clock in the clerks' office.

Hour lagged after hour, and it was midnight, while they still waited and waited; but Lotty did not come. In these anxious moments Meredith could but recall how but a few days since Hildred and himself had so waited for this woman, and without result. Thinking of that, he argued himself into the conviction that the agency which had been the means of disappointing them on that occasion was still at work.

"She will not come," he said, at length.

"My own view," returned the lawyer.

"She may even have fallen a victim to those who are so deeply interested in crushing her."

"She may," said Plunkett. "But I will give her another hour."

The hour was given, but Lotty did not come.

(To be continued.)



[GRANBY SAVILLE AND HENRY FIND THE BODY OF GABRIEL DESNEY.]

A YOUNG GIRL FROM THE COUNTRY.

By VANE IRETON ST. JOHN,

Author of "The Queen of Night," "In Spite of the World," &c.

CHAPTER XXV.

Laurel.—There's a murder somewhere here. The very air is clogged with horror. The trees themselves are still. As if they feared to rustle, lest the sound should wake some hidden crime. Oh! what is here? Oh, pitiable crime! oh, sin! oh, sweet Rinaldo! Crushed in his youth's first prime!

Love's Tragedy.

GRANBY SAVILLE rose, looked at his watch, and walked to the window.

The moon was up, as I have said, and the country was hushed beneath its brightness.

"Desney is late," he murmured, "I suppose he has been tempted to a walk by the beauty of the night."

As he spoke he was gazing across the grounds at the little dell, where the quiet lake lay darkling.

Across the patch of brilliance a shadow seemed to fall for a moment—then it passed along the avenue and disappeared.

He took no notice of this at the time, but returned to the table.

Mrs. Mansfield was asleep in her arm-chair; Louisa was reading; Henry was drawing.

"What can keep him so late?" he murmured to himself as he sat down by the fire, where no one seemed to notice him. "He appeared rather flurried when he left us. Perhaps he has gone up to London."

He sat for another ten minutes gazing at the fire.

Then the great clock in the hall struck the hour of eleven, solemnly.

He rose again and walked to the window.

The stillness seemed to strike him as something awful.

He was just about to speak to Henry when the door opened, and Clara entered.

"Has not Mr. Desney returned yet?" she asked.

"No, dear Clara," said Granby. "I cannot think what keeps him."

He approached the table.

Clara had sat down near the fire.

She was pale—ashen pale—and her whole body was in a tremor.

"What is the matter, dear one?" he cried, leaning over her. "Henry, bring me that bottle of smelling salts."

Clara made a gesture of negation.

"No—no," she said; "that is of no use. Let me have some brandy—it is my heart which is bad; I am subject to these fits."

Henry brought some brandy, and she drank off a large glassful.

Then a strange change came over her: her colour returned, an unnatural light shone in her eyes, her bosom heaved for a moment and then subsided again to its usual quiet breathing.

"I feel better now," she said; "Henry, get the cards, and let us have one game before Mr. Desney comes back."

"Did you sleep when you went up-stairs?" asked Granby Saville, who was seriously alarmed for Clara.

"Yes, for a time; but my head was in a whirl and my heart was bad, and strange dreams forced themselves into my brain. I had better far have remained down here."

Henry brought the cards, and they began to play.

The time flew by.

Yet it was a listless card-party.

Clara's unnatural flow of spirits soon ceased, Granby

was unusually silent, Louisa was annoyed and alarmed too, at Gabriel's prolonged absence; and Henry alone was intent upon the game.

Twelve o'clock struck. Mrs. Mansfield had retired, and Louisa threw up her cards.

"I can play no longer," she said, rising; "it is of no use waiting for Mr. Desney—he will not return at this hour."

This was uttered with that petulance which women sometimes use to conceal their grief.

"I fear not," returned Granby Saville, as he rose also, and approached the window—there seemed to be a fascination in that window—"yet why, I cannot conceive, unless he has gone to London. He can't have lost his way, for he knows the country well, and it is so bright that I can almost see as far as the Springhead."

Clara was standing by him as he spoke.

"After all," she said, in a low voice, "we may be alarming ourselves without cause. His friend may have remained at Lorneby for the night, and persuaded him to stop."

"True," returned Granby, "I will run over in the morning and see."

The morning came, bright and beautiful, and Granby Saville and Henry Mansfield mounted their horses to ride over to Lorneby.

At the hotel no one knew the name of Gabriel Desney.

A gentleman had come from Lexington the even-

ing before, and had sent a railway porter to Ellersby Grange.

A person had arrived about half-past eight at the hotel; had seen the traveller; remained in his room until the hour of departure came; and had accompanied him to the station.

This was all they could tell.

"Clearly," said Granby, "he has gone to London."

At the station they found, without much difficulty, the porter who had taken the letter to the Grange.

He remembered Mr. Desney at once.

"Oh!" he said, "he arrived here soon after me; and then he came to the station to see his friend off. When the train started, he went to the door, looked out, and then walked away towards the Grange."

"But, good God!" cried Granby Saville, in alarm, "he has never returned!"

The porter looked scared.

"Why, what's the matter, sir?" he said; "you don't think as how your friend has met any harm? There ain't many bad characters about here, and we scarce hear tell of a robbery, much less a murder."

Granby Saville was very pale, and his heart beat tumultuously.

There was no absolute evidence of foul play; but the mysterious disappearance of the young man suggested nothing else.

"What was the name of the gentleman whom Mr. Desney came to see—can you tell me that?" asked Saville.

"Yes, sir, it was Marston Grey; and now I recollect," continued the porter, who began to look upon himself as somebody of consequence, "Mr. Grey walked with him to the door of the station, and said something about the loneliness of the road, and not liking to let him go, and Mr. Desney laughed and made some joke about reaching the Grange by a short cut."

"A short cut? Where could that be?"

"There bain't any, except by the Springhead."

"The Springhead!" cried Granby Saville, in horror, "that is a terribly dangerous place—he may have fallen in, for the road is dark, and there is nothing to protect a traveller."

"It were a beautiful night, last night, sir," said the railway-porter, "it bain't likely he'd have walked in there, for the moon was a'most as bright as the sun."

"True; it was a fine night," murmured Granby; "but where can he have gone; is there any place on the road where he could have tarried?"

"The only place, sir," returned the man, "is the cottage of Robert Smithers, the woodcutter. He can

scarcely have stopped there; though old Bob might tell you whether he heard sounds last night."

Granby placed some money in the man's hand, and beckoning Henry to follow him, rode away in silence. "There is something very terrible in all this," he said at length. "I hope and trust nothing has happened to Mr. Desney."

"I hope not," cried Henry, who felt a strange choking sensation in his throat, and a dread oppression at his heart; "if it be so, it will be a death-blow to Louisa."

They said no more until their horses, ridden along the narrow bridle-path, led them to the cottage of old Bob Smithers.

Granby sprang down eagerly, and knocked at the door.

The old man quickly responded. "What is your business, gentlemen?" he said, somewhat surlily.

"I want to have a few minutes' talk with you," said Granby quietly. "It is something very serious, and if you answer me correctly you will be the means of taking a great load off my mind."

The two young men tied their horses to a tree, and entered the cottage.

The old man seemed fidgety and nervous, just as if he anticipated what they intended to ask.

"I am sorry to say," began Granby Saville, "that Mr. Desney, the tutor of Mr. Henry Mansfield, here, has disappeared most mysteriously. He passed along this road last night from Lornaby towards the Grange, and has never since been heard of. Do you remember hearing him pass?"

"Well," said the old man, "I went to bed early last night, so I didn't see anyone pass. But about half-past nine I heard footsteps, and a man singing a song."

"What song was that?" asked Henry quietly. "I don't know," returned Bob Smithers. "I never heard the tune before, and the words were outlandish—French like."

"That was he, then!" cried Granby; "that is proof at least that he passed this spot. How far are we now from the Springhead?"

"You can see it from the window here," said the old man, who gradually became more communicative; "it ain't more nor fifty yards."

Granby rose and looked out. "You heard no cry—no fall then?" he asked, as he glanced musingly at the thicket and the smooth velvet grass before it.

"Nothing more than I told you," returned the old man, "for I turned over and went to sleep. I be a heavy sleeper, and it would take a deal to wake me."

Granby went to the door and opened it. "Let us go to the edge of the chasm," said he, "and see if there are any marks near it."

They went as he suggested.

The chasm was deep and dark, and the sun failed to penetrate it. They could see, however, the bright water bubbling beneath, welling up with a murmuring sound—then meandering away gently in a slender stream until it swelled into a broad and turbulent river.

The ground near the edge of the chasm was dry and hard, and no footprints would remain upon it.

But just near the thicket, there was a spot where the ground seemed to have crumbled away, where desperate hands might have clutched the grass upon the edge in a terrible fall.

Granby Saville turned quickly to the woodcutter. "Can we reach the Springhead from this spot?" he asked.

"Yes," he said; "I will show you the way."

The old man seemed strangely agitated, but no one noticed him.

Of such a crime he would be the last suspected.

So the two young men followed him with hearts beating wildly with fear and eagerness.

He led them down some rough-hewn steps on the other side of his cottage, and they found themselves at length on the margin of the tiny stream.

Following the course of this, they reached the Springhead, where four different springs bubbled forth in a kind of circular basin, formed by nature, out of the chalky soil.

This basin was overhung by long grass and dank weeds, and tall reeds, which nodded in the light morning breeze.

Granby Saville was the first to reach the spot—the first, therefore, to utter a cry of alarm and horror.

In the clear, pellucid water, with the springs rippling over his marble brow, lay Gabriel Desney, dead and still.

His eyes were closed, as if in sleep; his lips firmly compressed.

There was a deep wound in his forehead, but the rippling spring had washed away all stain of blood—washed it away and mingled it with the waters of the broad river, just as the sorrow of a single heart is absorbed in the turmoil of the world's great struggle.

"See," said Granby Saville, in a choking voice, "he is dead."

Henry knelt down, gazed for a moment in silence, and then burst into tears.

He had loved his tutor, who had ever been kind, indulgent and patient with him, and apart from his own sorrow, which was great, he thought of the sorrow of the young heart to whom Gabriel Desney was all in all.

"Come," said Granby Saville, gently; "come, Henry—you must leave grief to others who have more right to sorrow. Let us raise him from this bed, which is worthy of him in nothing, but its gentle peacefulness, and hasten to the Grange, that they may send a carriage for him."

With the assistance of old Smithers, they bore him to the cottage.

"Let us not wait for a conveyance," cried Henry; "let us lay his body on my horse, and carry him home at once."

This was done.

The inanimate form of the handsome spiritualist Gabriel Desney—"more sinned against than sinning," was laid upon the horse; and the young men silently took their way towards the Grange.

"Heaven forgive me!" murmured the old man, as he watched their forms disappear along the tortuous path, "I hope and trust I have done right."

CHAPTER XXVI

Alas! how light a cause may move
Dissension between hearts that love.

Eyes will forget the gentle ray

They wore in courtship's smiling day;

And hearts, so lately mingled, seem

Like broken clouds—or like the stream

That smiling left the mountain's brow

As though its waters ne'er could cover,

Yet ere it reach the plains below.

Breaks into floods that part for ever.

Thomas Moore.

CLARA MANSFIELD was seated at the window, overlooking the front lawn, and Louisa was beside her.

The former was very pale and ill, and spoke little.

Her eyes were turned ever and anon with a melancholy glance upon the face of her sister; and then again her gaze would wander over the bright country, as if she feared the approach of some one.

Louisa, too, was pale, and her eyes were red with weeping.

She had slept little. A vague terror had invaded her heart.

Either Gabriel Desney was false, and had fled from her, or some dark misfortune had befallen him.

"Why do you look at me so strangely, Clara?" she cried, as she caught one of her sister's glances.

Clara took Louisa's hand, and held it in a close embrace.

"My dear girl," she said, in a low tremulous voice, "I fear some evil has befallen Mr. Desney, and I dread to anticipate your sorrow."

"Oh! Clara, do not speak of it so calmly," cried Louisa, "if anything were to happen to Gabriel Desney I should break my heart."

Clara smiled bitterly.

"Hearts are not so easily broken!" she murmured.

"Believe me, were you never to see Mr. Desney more, it would be the best thing for you and for all. I say it to you, Louisa: I who have made sacrifices and done things for you that no one else would have had the courage to dream of."

As she spoke, her eyes had wandered out again over the country.

"Oh! what is that?" she cried, as her glance fell upon the two young men walking slowly, each leading a horse, and on the first horse a senseless burden.

Louisa clutched her sister's arm convulsively.

"Just Heavens! what is that they are bringing home? Oh, God! It's a man's body. It is Gabriel, I know it, it is my Gabriel, dead, dead, murdered!"

Clara started from her in terror.

"Murdered!" she cried, "who talks of murder? He may be ill, he may have fainted. I will go down and see."

She was not answered.

The shock and the terrible presentiment took a strange effect upon the young girl.

She cowered down upon the ground, and hid her face in her hands, as if she would shut out from herself some horrid vision.

Her whole form was convulsed with emotion, trembling, throbbing, pulsing in the agony of despair and dread.

Clara rushed down into the grounds; and, with her curls streaming in the wind, ran along the broad avenue to meet the mournful cavalcade.

"Oh! what has happened, Granby?" she said, as she caught Granby's hand; "my God! it is Mr. Desney! Oh! tell me, he is not dead!"

"Alas! Clara it is too true, he is dead! We found

him lying in the water at the Springhead. He must have fallen in when he was coming home last night from the station. Poor fellow! I fear to tell Louisa."

"I will tell her," said Clara, in a low, husky voice. "Poor Gabriel! poor Louie!"

She left them and went into the house, while the servants helped them in with their burden.

She found Louisa still crouched down in terrible grief.

"Louisa, dear," said the elder in a voice of unfeigned sorrow; "Louisa, sister, dear, come away with me to my room. I have something to tell you."

Louisa looked up into Clara's face, and seeing her pale and haggard and tearful, knew her story beforehand.

"You need tell me nothing," she said, in an almost inaudible tone. "I already know all. Gabriel is dead, and lies below. Take me to him."

"No, no; not now!"

"Yes; now."

Louisa rose from her crouching posture, and left the room, walking down calmly, steadily, until she reached the chamber where they had laid Desney's body.

She had reckoned upon her strength.

She was wrong.

The first sight of his still, pale face was enough, and she fell senseless upon his cold breast.

So Gabriel Desney died and was buried.

The law held its inquiry upon him, and the usual verdict of coroners' juries was given and recorded.

Gabriel Desney had "perished through misadventure," so said the twelve men, and the world having endorsed the verdict, no more was said.

Certainly, circumstances tended to disprove any idea of murder.

His watch and money, and papers were left intact; and, with the exception of the mark on his forehead, which might have been occasioned by his fall, there were no evidences of violence on his person.

Marston Grey came down to Ellersby to attend the funeral.

He recognized Clara, spoke to her like an old friend, and had a long interview with her alone.

What passed at that interview no one knew and none surmised.

Certain it was, however, that from that moment, Marston Grey was more reserved in his manners towards her, and left by an early train, refusing even to stay a night in the house.

It was on the day after the funeral of Gabriel Desney, that a letter arrived at Ellersby Grange, from John Shadow, summoning Granby Saville back to London.

It requested him not to delay a moment, as matters were now ripe for action.

On the evening before his departure he took Clara into the drawing-room for a last interview.

There was no difficulty in being alone now.

Henry had gone away by an early train to visit a friend, that he might forget, if possible, the terrible cloud which had fallen upon his young heart; Louisa was confined to her bed, and Mrs. Mansfield was watching by her side.

So they sat in the deep twilight alone.

"Clara," said Granby, "I leave you to-morrow, for a long time, it may be a very long time, if you cannot induce your mother to come to London."

"I fear she will not. I, indeed, wish sincerely she would. I hate this dull and weary place."

"And so must your mother, Clara, after what has happened. I am sure the house must be distasteful to her. There is a gloom about it always which, had it not been for your presence, I could not have borne."

There was a pause.

"The more I think of Gabriel Desney's death," resumed Granby, at length, "the more I am persuaded that he died by foul means. I have this morning received from Marston Grey a letter in which he begs me to see him immediately I reach London. He assures me he has important information to give me."

Clara started.

"Do you know Mr. Grey?" she asked, hurriedly.

"No, I have spoken to him but once—yesterday at the funeral."

"It is strange he should write to you."

"Strange, why strange? He evidently thinks as I do about his friend, and wishes me to aid him in discovering the murderer. Gabriel Desney may have had some secret enemy—who knows but Marston Grey has discovered him?"

It was well for Clara that there was no light in the room except the dim, unearthly twilight.

Her form trembled, her face was deadly pale, her bosom panted as if it would burst through its muslin drapery.

"You will see this Marston Grey, then, immediately you reach London?" she said, in a low voice.

"Yes, dear, and I will write to you directly I have seen him, and tell you what he says," returned Granby, as he passed his arm round her, and pressed her to his heart. "Why, good Heavens, Clara! what is the matter? You are trembling like an aspen-leaf, and your lips are stone cold."

Clara burst into tears. That was the happiest relief she had experienced for weeks.

"You are going away from me to-morrow, dearest Granby," she sobbed; "going away without naming a time for return. Oh, I shall never, never see you again!"

"What—what is this, my darling?" he murmured, gently: "I am only going away for a few days, or, at any rate, a week or so. I will persuade Mrs. Mansfield to go to London, and there we can always be together."

He kissed her pale lips. "But this Mr. Marston Grey, do not see him—have nothing to do with him!" cried Clara, casting her bright eyes up towards him.

Granby glanced at her in astonishment.

"Why not, dear one?"

"I know him well, dear Granby; he is an enemy of mine. He will try to injure me with you. I cannot bear that you should bear ill of me."

"What can he know of you which you do not wish me to hear, dear Clara?"

Clara drew herself up proudly.

"He knows nothing, Granby. Neither he nor any one else knows aught against me."

Granby pressed her yielding form to his heart.

"Forgive me, my own," he said; "forgive me. But why not let me see this man? he can persuade me to nothing which could do you an injury with me."

Clara did not answer.

"It would be better for me to see him, would it not?" added Granby.

"Yes, yes!" she added musingly; "perhaps, after all, it would be!"

There was a silence, during which the young man looked down with intense love upon the head pillowed on his breast, kissed her weary eyes, smoothed her glossy curls.

"Shall I see Mrs. Mansfield, and speak to her about the London trip?" he said, at length.

Clara started as if from a reverie.

"No, dear Granby, no!" she exclaimed. "I do not suppose she will be down to-night, and you will start early in the morning, so you will scarcely have time to say enough to her. My mother is an odd woman—perhaps I had better try my hand with her?"

"Very well, dear one."

And so they sat together until supper-time came.

At this meal Mrs. Mansfield made her appearance. She was in better spirits than she had been all day; for Louisa was decidedly improved.

Granby Saville, however, made no mention of the London trip, and at eleven, Clara retired to her room.

Her maid, as usual, came to undress her, and found her writing.

"Lock the door, Lucy," said Clara, "I have something to tell you. Sit down for a moment, while I finish this letter."

She wrote widely and hurriedly; and, as her maid cast a shy glance over the paper, it seemed so really like her mistress's usual manuscript.

When she had completed it, she folded it and directed it in a free bold hand.

Then she sealed it, laid it down, and looked Lucy firmly in the face.

"Lucy," she said, "I have been kind to you."

"Yes, indeed, Miss Clara."

"You know that I helped you to leave Australia and return to England?"

"Yes."

"Well, I want you now to do me a service. It may seem a trifling one—it is trifling in itself, but it involves a secret which you must keep. If I were to find you deceiving me, I should be terribly angry."

The flash which shot from her young mistress's eyes made the girl tremble.

"I have never deceived you, Miss Clara," she said, "I will not now."

"Well, then, you see this letter?—place it in your pocket. I wish you to go to Lorneby, give it to the railway-porter, and bid him deliver it with the London letters in the morning. You always bring me my letters at breakfast, take care they reach me hand but mine."

The girl listened in surprise and alarm.

"When do you wish me to go, Miss Clara?" she said in a tremulous tone.

"To-night—now!"

"But, madam, if you please, madam, it is nearly midnight, and I cannot—I dare not, cross the fields at night!"

"Dare not! Why?"

"Because—if you please, ma'am—poor Mr. Desney—he was murdered there, and I am so frightened!" The girl fairly shook with terror.

Clara eyed her in anger for a moment.

"Who talks to you of murder, silly girl?" she said, "Mr. Desney was not murdered—he was careless, and walked over into the Springhead. Go—do as you are bidden."

The girl knelt and sobbed.

Evidently a great fear was on her.

"Oh! madam, indeed I cannot go. I will go in the morning before any are up, and no one shall know it. But oh! I cannot cross the country to-night. I should be afraid of seeing him. I should die if I were to hear a sound near the Springhead, and fancy I saw his spirit—would not you, madam?"

Clara Mansfield sprang up, nearly oversetting the toilet-table.

She averted her head, and when she again turned, there was blood on her lips, where she had bitten them.

"Foolish, silly, girl!" she cried, in a voice of strange and thrilling emotion. "I have done wrong in thinking I could trust you to aid me. Yet never mind, do as you say. Go early in the morning—do not let the porter see your face, and remember, when the post brings the letters, be in readiness to receive them, and give them to me. You can undress me now."

The girl, whose hands still trembled with the dread that had seized her, thanked her mistress, and proceeded to divest her of her clothing. As she did so, she felt how damp and clammy was Clara's skin.

"I fear I startled you just now, Miss Clara," she said. "I am very sorry, indeed."

Clara had recovered her equanimity.

"You did, Lucy," she said; "you are a nervous, silly girl—worse than I am, I fancy. Your talk did give me a turn, but it is gone now."

As soon as Clara was in bed, her maid left her and went up into her own room.

Here her curiosity tempted her to glance at the address of the letter.

She started in surprise.

"There is a mystery here," she murmured, "what can it mean?"

But though she thought long, she could make nothing of it. If she wished to discover anything, her only plan was to watch.

On the next morning, Granby Saville left for London by an early train.

Clara was up to bid him adieu, and their parting was long and tender.

"I shall always love you," said Clara, "always be yours. Love, and have faith in me."

And he went away in faith.

Alas, Granby Saville!

Safer is the mariner who, amid the wreck and the tempest, trusts to a single plank on the wide ocean than he who, in the storm of life, trusts to a woman's love!

At nine o'clock Mrs. Mansfield was in the breakfast-room with Clara.

A gentle knock came to the door, and Lucy entered, bearing a silver tray on which were three letters.

They were for Clara.

She took them; opened them leisurely, throwing the envelopes in the fire as she did so.

"Ah!" she exclaimed, at length; "here is a letter from Mrs. Hume. She is in London, and wishes to see me. Will you read her letter, mother?"

"No, child; read it to me."

Clara did so. It ran thus:

"MY DEAR CLARA,—We are in London for a few days. Pray come and see me. You will be very comfortable and enjoy yourself amazingly; for we shall have plenty of company. Come directly."

"Your affectionate friend,

"EMILY HUME."

"I should like to go very much," said Clara, "if Louisa were not so ill."

"I can attend to Louisa, if you wish to see your old friend," returned Mrs. Mansfield.

Clara ran across, and sitting down by her mother, passed her arm round her neck.

"Oh, thank you, mother dear!"

Then she stopped.

"What is the matter?" asked Mrs. Mansfield.

"Louie will think it unkind."

"No, no, child, she will not. She is very ill, and quiet will do her good. But you cannot go alone."

"No, I will take Lucy."

"Well, then, go at once. Stay a few days and I will join you in London as soon as Louisa is well. This place has become hateful to me since Desney died. Poor fellow, his terrible death has affected me more than you can tell, Clara, for I loved him almost as a son."

Clara did not answer.

She rose hastily, and left the room, saying:

"I will go and tell Louisa of my intended visit."

On the stairs she met Lucy.

"Go to your room," she said; "collect a few things—then to mine and pack me a change of clothes. We are going to London immediately."

CHAPTER XXVII

The Duke.—There must be justice done.

Eleanor.—In truth there must, But not revenge. Let patience crown your counsels. I ask delay that I may prove my right— But nothing of your pity. The Comical Revenge.

TWELVE o'clock saw Clara Mansfield and her maid descend from the carriage and enter the station.

Clara eagerly scanned the time-table.

At half-past twelve the express started for London, and arrived at two. The train by which Granby had gone arrived at twelve.

"Surely," she murmured, "he will not pay his first visit to Marston Grey! No—no, he will see his friend first. I shall be in time."

At two o'clock Clara was in London.

The address on Mrs. Hume's letter was 10, Clarence Terrace, Regent's Park; but it was not to that spot she betook herself.

She ordered the driver of the cab into which she entered with her maid and her luggage to drive to the Sussex Hotel, where she took rooms in the name of Mrs. Malvern and servant.

She counted on her mother's apathy for not writing to her.

She left Lucy in charge of the place and went out alone.

Marston Grey lived in Pemberton Street, Pall Mall, not far from the hotel where Clara had taken up her lodging, and she had no difficulty in finding his residence.

He was absent, but was expected back before the evening.

"Can I write a note to him?" said Clara, whose veil was down, and whose face was therefore hidden from the gaze of the curious servant.

"Yes, certainly, madam."

She ushered her into a well-furnished room.

"Is Mr. Grey married yet?" said Clara, as, after writing her note she slipped five shillings into the girl's hand.

"Law, no, ma'am, he's a reg'lar old bachelor."

The note Clara left was as follows:

"SIR,—I should not deign to write to you but that my happiness for life is at stake. As a woman who feels herself on the brink of a precipice over which a rash and foolish man may plunge her, I demand an interview with you. You have, I am aware, written to Granby Saville. I ask as a right to see you once more before you speak to him. I am at the Sussex Hotel. Come this evening, and ask for Mrs. Malvern."

"CLARA MANSFIELD."

At seven o'clock, just as the servant had cleared away the dinner things from the luxurious room which Clara had chartered for herself, Marston Grey was announced.

He entered the room with studied politeness, and said quietly:

"Good evening, Mrs. Malvern."

Clara rose, extended her hand, which Marston took and let fall again instantly, as if it burnt him. Then Lucy left the room, and they were alone.

Clara had dressed herself in such a manner as to produce the most ravishing idea of her beauty.

She wore a violet coloured velvet dress, half low; a gauze covering concealing her snowy bosom; her curls hanging in rich luxuriance around her polished brow.

Her wish was accomplished.

"If I did not know her to be hateful," said Marston Grey to himself, "I should fall in love with her."

"Well, madam," he cried aloud, "I am here—what is it you want with me?"

Clara smiled sweetly.

"Can you ask me such a question?" she cried; "and yet," she added, archly, "perhaps it is natural, since you have never been really in love."

Marston Grey moved uneasily in his chair.

"What is this beautiful diend after, now?" he thought, "some diabolical scheme, I'll warrant me, or she would not try to be so charming."

"My question is natural," he said. "I do not understand your motive in seeing me to-night."

Clara sighed.

"And yet," she murmured, "I have come to London to-day secretly, on purpose to meet you—I have risked the displeasure of my friends for no other reason than because I had something to warn you against—something too to beg from your kindness and mercy."

"Miss Mansfield," said Marston Grey, "I have already told you that you are acting a wrong part—I have hinted something more terrible—I wish to see Granby Saville, that I may warn him and prevent him

from falling into the same snare as my poor murdered friend, Gabriel Desney."

Clara's eyes flashed fire.

"Granby Saville," she cried, "stands in no danger from me, though others who have injured me may live to curse themselves for their folly. Granby is my betrothed husband, and it is to preserve to myself his love, and to save him, too, from the unhappiness which might be caused by your mad suspicions, that I am here to-night."

Marston Grey looked at her in surprise.

"Prevent me!" he cried; "how do you propose to prevent me?"

"I will appeal to your sense of honour—to your man's heart—to every feeling of justice and humanity. Would it be just to run the risk of shipwrecking the whole of my life because you have formed some dim suspicion in your mind? Granby Saville would not believe you, nor could you prove to the world a crime that never was committed, yet you would leave upon the minds of all a horrible suspicion, and bring upon my name a cloud which would rest upon it till my last day."

Marston Grey rose and paced the room in agitation.

"What am I to do, then?" he cried; "am I to suffer another to be sacrificed because I fear to speak?—am I to allow the murderer of my friend to escape because I fear to implicate you?"

"Lack no such sacrifice," exclaimed Clara, keeping down with difficulty the fierce anger which swelled her breast at his words. "Watch, search, make what investigation you please, but do not sacrifice the innocent in order that you may punish the guilty."

"Miss Mansfield," said Grey, "we are no strangers to one another. I know that in dealing with you I am not dealing with a woman of ordinary mind or ordinary passions. A concession which I should grant to another I should refuse to you, because I should believe you were seeking it to gain time."

"You have no reason to doubt me."

"Have I not?"

"No; you have none."

"You are wrong; I have, and I will tell you. When we first met I was struck by your beauty, and at one time imagined I could have loved you. This idea I cast off, because I found you were engaged to Gabriel Desney, who was a dear friend of mine. You married him—he loved you dearly; yet you betrayed him."

"It is false."

"No, no, it is not false. You were faithless; I knew it, though Gabriel but suspected it. Captain Winter has boasted of it in the mess-room."

Clara flushed crimson.

"It is false," she cried, "a base, cowardly untruth! And you, too, Marston Grey, how do you dare to speak to me thus, when Gabriel Desney never dared to accuse me? I see your motive now; you wish to hunt me down, to persecute me, to destroy me, because I rejected your foolish love, because I despised you; because you were too silly and weak a boy to wed a woman of my mind and character. Years are nothing, Marston Grey; I now—a mere girl in age—am your senior in intellect and knowledge of the world. I defy you, if you are to be my enemy; I can persuade you to be less rash if you choose to be my friend."

Marston Grey eyed her sternly.

"Years have passed, madam," he exclaimed, "since the foolish days you speak of. I am a man now, who has no heart to lose, there exists no woman who can rob me of my peace of mind. I feel that Heaven has deputed to me the task of avenging one who has been slain, and no entreaties, no threats, shall turn me from my path."

"But your reasons, Marston, for these deadly, unjust suspicions?"

"You returned to England, Clara Mansfield, loving one whom you never dreamed could be yours—you found that all the obstacles you had dreaded were swept away, but you discovered in the person of Gabriel Desney an obstacle far more insurmountable than all. For some reason or another, you wished to prevent his marriage with your sister—he threatened to expose you to Granby Saville—you hated him, too, because though you loved him no longer, you were piqued at his preference for another, and so, in a fit of passion, you destroyed him."

"It is false!" cried Clara Mansfield, rising and confronting him; "were I a man, you would not dare address me thus; but as I am a woman, you may take your pitiful triumph."

She walked away to the window and looked out.

There was nothing there to see but the black night, but there was that in her own self which she desired no one to behold.

She was in deadly fear.

Her eyes were unnaturally bright, her bosom was bursting, a suffocating feeling of irremovable danger was upon her.

After a few moments she returned.

Her face was now calm, her eyes were tearful, but

not haggard, and she laid her hand softly on Marston's arm, turning those bright eyes up to his.

"Marston," she said in a gentle voice full of tenderness and sorrow; "Marston, you once loved me. Believe me, you are doing me a bitter, cruel wrong. Stay, then, your hand; do not destroy me on mere surmise. If you were to ruin me when I am innocent, you would never forgive yourself. Watch, search, investigate as you will, but do not be so terribly unjust."

Marston Grey was but flesh and blood, and he could not answer this appeal.

Clara saw her advantage.

She was not the one to lose it.

Down on her knees at his feet she went, sobbing bitterly, with her hands pressed to her brow, and her curls streaming over her shoulders.

"Oh! forgive me, Marston, for days gone by," she cried; "forgive me, that I did not love you. Captain Winter told you falsely. I never betrayed Gabriel Desney, although I did not love him as I should have done. And oh! Marston, I swear to you I am innocent of his blood. Do not then destroy me for suspicion only. I love Granby Saville; my love for him is my only hope in life; and you cannot, you cannot be so terribly unjust as to take this from me without proof of any crime."

Marston Grey raised her up.

"Rise Clara," he said, in a husky tone, "you have no need to kneel to me. It shall be as you say. I will not disclose to Granby Saville my suspicions of you. I will only tell him that I believe my friend to have been murdered: and ask his assistance in discovering the criminal."

Clara did not answer.

"If you are guilty," pursued Marston Grey, "so much the more fearful it will be for you to learn that Saville's is the hand which points out the murderer."

"Unrelenting, bitter foe!" muttered Clara Mansfield; "how cruelly shall he repent his hate?"

She smiled as she answered aloud:

"I thank you, Marston. Time will prove to you how you have wronged me. Granby Saville will never be my judge, because, as regards me, there is no crime to punish."

"Heaven grant it may be so!" said Grey; "but tell me, how long shall you remain in London?"

Clara eyed him curiously.

Why did he ask this?

"I do not know," she answered; "probably for some time, as my mother comes to London soon."

Marston started.

"Indeed, when?"

"I do not know."

He took his hat.

"Good evening, Miss Mansfield," he said; "I will, as you say, watch, seek and investigate. But, meanwhile, I will remain silent."

"Thank you, Marston, that is all I ask," she answered, smiling. "Good-night."

He said "good-night," turned and left her.

She stood erect watching him till the door had closed on him; then she sank, as if overpowered, on her chair.

"Oh, Heaven!" she cried, clasping her hands, "am I to be dragged on and on until the world is but one enemy which I must combat or fall? Oh, Granby, dear Granby! would that you could save me from this peril!"

That night the eleven o'clock express set down only one passenger at Lorneby Station, and that passenger was Marston Grey.

(To be continued.)

"SAVE ME, SAVE MY DOG."—An anecdote is in circulation about King George's Danish Mentor, Mr. Sponeck, indicative of that gentleman's promptness of decision when thwarted by minute regulations. On his late passage by packet from Copenhagen to Hamburg his dog was washed overboard. Stoppage of the ship was refused, on the ground that mere animals were not entitled to rescue, the bye-laws only applying to "passengers or crew." In a twinkling Sponeck jumped overboard and claimed for self and dog benefit of the launch-boat.

A DESCENDANT OF LORD BACON'S INTERRED AT SUNDERLAND.—On Monday week, the remains of Mrs. Elizabeth Earl, relict of the late Dr. Thomas Earl, of West Auckland, were interred in the cemetery at Fulwell. The deceased lady died after a short illness, at the advanced age of 99 years. She was daughter of William Bacon, Esq., of Warnell, Cumberland, and a lineal descendant of Lord Bacon, England's great Lord Chancellor. She has left three children, viz., Mr. B. Earl, Mrs. Margaret Harrison, and Mrs. E. Harland, all residing in Sunderland.

VANDALISM IN ESSEX.—The famous Roman grave-mounds known as the Bartlow Hills, after having been spared by the plough and the harrow for more than

a thousand years, have at length been condemned to destruction, in order to accommodate a trivial feeder of the Great Eastern Railway. The subject of their destruction having been brought under the notice of the council of the Archaeological Institute, that body at once addressed a remonstrance to the directors of the railway, and it is to be hoped they will be successful in preserving these interesting vestiges of antiquity, which are indubitably among the most singular relics we possess of a very early and obscure period in the history of this country.

THE THREE ROSES.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

FATHER BURLEIGH'S CONFESSION.

Oh! thou dead
And everlasting witness! whose unslaking
Blood darkens earth and heaven! what thou art now
I know not! but if thou see'st what I am,
I think thou wilt forgive him whom his God
Can ne'er forgive, nor his own soul.
Byron's Cain

THE old man hurried to the stables once again, saddled the best blood in the stalls, and hastened to St. Michael's. He returned in two hours, attending Maurice de Lorraine, who passed immediately into the chamber of the dying maniac. I suppose some would say it was mesmerism, some mere mannerism, while others, with a better faith, would define it to be the power of religion that enabled the young clergyman to compose the raving girl, who, settling into her last repose, lost that agonized contraction of her features that had, since her illness, marked her countenance even in its moments of exhaustion.

One hour after this Jessie died.

Her funeral took place the third day from that of her death. The event was broken gradually to Roland Mildred: who, nevertheless, suffered a severe relapse. It was a fortnight before his convalescence permitted his relatives to return to their home, taking with them Janet, whose feebleness required the constant attentions of her aunt and cousin.

The deeply tragic events at the Limes had so shattered the nerves of the good old pastor of All Saints, that he now lay prostrate on his humble bed at the cottage parsonage. Martha Downes and Maggy Upham and the young curate vied in their attentions upon him. But the influence of the young curate was, as heretofore, the most healthful. His look and tone were, as usual, life-inspiring.

"I don't know what makes me feel so," said Martha Downes, as she busied herself setting bulbs in the garden; "but somehow or other, good and great as he is, it does seem to me as if Maurice de Lorraine oughtn't to be a curate!"

"Why?" asked Maggy. "I want you to tell me why, because I have often had that thought myself?"

"Why, he seems too full of life."

"Flippancy, lightness of conduct, a—a gaiety—joyousness?"

"N-no—not—that, but too full of life—that's the word! I don't know any other." And so, indeed, felt every one, even while worshipping their gifted young curate.

I have spoken before of the half-suppressed joyousness of heart springing from perfect healthfulness of body, mind and spirit—rising above circumstances, and making glad every gloomy scene, bright every dark scene; magnetizing the sick with health, inspiring the sceptic with faith, raising the desponding by hope, softening the hardened, and redeeming the reprobate sinner by love! It was in the fulness of this power that Maurice de Lorraine sat by the bed of Mr. Burleigh on the afternoon of the Sunday next preceding Easter. He had composed his patient into a refreshing sleep. He had slept many hours, and still he retained his seat by the bed, watching him steadily. At any sign of restlessness Maurice would quietly slip his arm under the aged head, raise it tenderly, change the pillow, let the weary head down easily again, draw out his arm, and, smoothing back the thin grey locks from the sunken temples, recompose him to sleep. If again he stirred, a few passes of the cool hand over his brow and temples stilled him into deep repose—so his rest was protracted for many hours. At last, knowing that he had slept long enough, he changed his pillows and resumed his seat by his side with cheerfulness.

"Maurice," began Mr. Burleigh.

"My father!" answered the young man.

"My son, 'bless me, for I have sinned!'"

Then there was a pause. Presently he said:

"Maurice, I have somewhat to say to thee."

"Speak, father, I listen."

"Draw the curtain, shut out the light, close the door, for it is a long and dark story I have to tell thee, my son."

He did as requested, and resumed his seat by the

bedside of the invalid. He took one of the old wasted hands within his own, and held it while he gained strength to tell his story.

"Did it never occur to you that I had a lifelong sorrow and remorse?"

"I have seen it, father, and hoped for the day when you would confide in me, and share your burden with me; to-night, I thank God that you have strength to do so. I listen."

And he pressed the thin hand, and his young, strong life seemed to send energy through all the feeble nerves of the invalid. He commenced his story:

"I was early left an orphan with my twin sister. We were placed by the executor of our father's will in the same school for education—she in the female department, I in the male. I admired that sister of mine with an enthusiasm that no words can describe. I loved her with a strength and devotion to which no words can do justice. If I had ambition for wealth, rank, power or fame, it was that she might enjoy it. The strict rule of the seminary in which we were placed forbade our meeting. The boys' and girls', or as they would now be termed the young gentlemen's and young ladies' departments, had not even a chapel in common, but each had its separate place of worship and its distinct pastor. Once a month, however, I was permitted to see my sister for half-an-hour in the ladies' parlour, in the presence of one of the assistants. These, restricted as our intercourse was, were the very brightest moments of my school days. Amelia was beautiful. Brothers do not generally see their sisters' beauty, but I felt Amelia's extreme loveliness in my heart. I could see in every succeeding visit I paid her a new unfolding of beauty—some new fresh leaf of the sweet bud blooming forth. How I longed for the time to come when we should be of age—be emancipated from school-life, and when I should take her home and have her with me for ever. Then, as I watched her growing into such wonderful beauty, I would think that even then some man would see and love her, would win her deepest love and while her from me, and a pang of jealousy would dart through my heart. I grew to look upon Amelia's future marriage as a certainty, and accustomed myself to think of passing my life in her home as the bachelor brother and uncle, and of making her children my heirs."

I determined to enter the Church.

I went to college and commenced a course of theological reading the same year. I became interested in my studies; strongly attached to my chosen vocation. I came to think that I was called to it. I think so still. I grew quiet—then cheerful. In due course of time I was appointed to this same ministry. Here I made many friends, found congenial pursuits, and was very happy in my calling; until one day, when I received a letter in which I learned that my sister had fled her school, abandoned her religion, and married. Bowed to the earth by grief and humiliation, without saying one word to any one as to the cause of my journey, I suddenly left this neighbourhood, to learn the particulars of the flight. All that had been written was confirmed, and more was told me. Amelia had fled, and the companion of her flight was a handsome, gay, and fascinating man of high rank—of irreproachable reputation certainly—when, by the way, I had sometimes seen in my father's house, and who, the last year of our stay at home, had paid the beautiful child rather marked attention. How he found access to her again, how he contrived to win her away, no one knew. They were married by special license at a protestant church. I learned that he had taken her home to a small farm, where they were now living. I was deeply grieved, but this marriage was beyond remedy, of course. I returned, in deep mortification, to my pastoral charge. I wrote many letters to my sister; I never received an answer. I doubt whether she ever got my letters; I have much reason to believe they were intercepted by her husband. Finally, in despair of ever receiving a response, I ceased to write to her. Years passed; and then, thinking that time might have brought some change favourable to a free communication between us, I wrote to her again, but received no answer. A second time I ceased to importune her with letters. Several years elapsed, and then came a yearning of the heart for the companion of my childhood, that obliged me to set out on the long, rough country journey to visit her. I arrived at nightfall, finding there the aged farmer who had always farmed the land for my father during his lifetime. The old man, with his aged wife now occupied the farm-house. He invited me into the large, old-fashioned parlour, where his wife received me with much cordiality. He took my hat and gloves, laid them aside, gave me the easiest arm-chair, in the coziest corner of the fireplace, and set a little stand with a pitcher of cider and a tumbler by my side. Then, requesting his old wife to hurry supper, he drew the other great arm-chair to the opposite corner of the chimney, and, sitting down, prepared to entertain me,

if I were inclined to conversation. I lost no time in inquiring after my sister and brother-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Upham. He gave me the following facts, which I shall, for convenience sake, put into my own words.

When Augustus first brought his bride home he furnished the house with much taste and elegance. Her mother's and her father's old friends—the most exclusive of the county aristocracy—flocked around them; the story of her elopement had preceded them, but in that neighbourhood, only made the beautiful bride more an object of interest and curiosity. Great attention was shown them, especially as her family was one of the oldest and most extensively connected in the county. On their parts also, the rites of hospitality were munificently dispensed.

A series of elegant little dinner-parties were given by them. They were greatly admired, as also were the accomplished host, and beautiful hostess. This was, or seemed, a very charming change to my sister, who now found herself the centre of an admiring circle of friends.

A severe winter advanced upon them, however; the snow was two feet deep on the ground, the waters of the bay near the shore were crusted, the river was closed, the free interchange of visits in the neighbourhood was interrupted; ladies certainly could not get out in that severe weather; their visiting was stopped. Not so their hospitalities. A succession of select and elegant champagne suppers, for gentlemen only, replaced the former entertainments. From these, of course, Amelia was absent; but Augustus, with all his elegant accomplishments and graceful fascinations, was there in power—and so those select suppers attracted the *élite* of the county. Amelia was certainly very much alone at this time, and would have felt very lonely doubtless, but that her husband loved her sincerely, earnestly, passionately, and that consoled her fully for the loss of all other society.

An event soon occurred, however, that seriously interrupted her happiness.

One night, when she had retired to bed at an unusually late hour, leaving her husband at supper with his friends, she fell into a sweet, deep sleep, from which she was suddenly aroused by loud and angry words in high contention. The excited tones came from the supper-room. She started in terror from her bed. The chamber clock struck three. She listened. The voices grew sharp and fierce in conflict; and "Cheat!" "Swindler!" "*Gambler!*" were the terms of reproach she heard scornfully coupled with her husband's name. She did not hear his voice in denial—smooth, graceful, slippery, and fascinating as a serpent he seemed. She heard his melodious tones without catching the words.

But a flash of light had fallen on her life, and revealed many, many obscurities she had not been able to understand before. Meanwhile, the high, arrogant and overbearing voice was loud in its epithets of "Gambler! blackleg! sharper!" insultingly bestowed upon her handsome and accomplished—her beloved Augustus! Dressing herself quickly, she descended to the supper-room, threw open the door, and stood pale and trembling within. The voice that had been high, sharp and fierce in angry and scornful invectives a moment before, now instantly ceased,—nay, they all became quiet and gentlemanly as soon as Amelia made her momentary appearance among them. Only Augustus moved toward her in his graceful manner, and looking in her face with a fascinating blending of tenderness with command, drew her arm within his own, and with gentle force, conducted her from the room back into their own chamber.

"Remain here. I will return and explain soon—as soon as I get these fellows—I mean gentlemen, away," and he left her.

An instant after she heard his sweet melodious voice defending himself with persuasive but ignoble eloquence. She had been religiously brought up—educated in a spirit of love, charity, and forgiveness—yet, if these charges were false, she would have had Augustus, rather thrust them down the throat of the charger, than plead his defence in this sweet, melodious tone! and if true—but he loved her dearly, she knew it, she would ask him. No! she could not do that either! Ask him! that would be to insult him; should she insult him also—she! just after he had been subjected to so much contumely—no, no! never!

Presently she heard the company disperse quietly—his eloquence, or their consideration for herself; or both, had prevailed. Augustus tripped lightly up the stairs—entered laughing gaily. Oh, how she wished he had not laughed. Whether the charges were true or false, that laugh was ignoble then. He crossed the chamber, threw himself gaily and gracefully into a chair, and drew her to his bosom.

"My pet, my delicate, trembling little pet! So they woke you up with their noise, and terrified you with their violence."

Nothing could be more soothing, more affectionate than his manner. She replied:

"Well, never mind now. It is all over, dear. And you are very good, instead of getting angry as some men would, because I came in upon you then, only to feel sympathy with my womanish tremors. I am not given to such trembling, however; I never was."

"My darling, I have so much sympathy for these womanish tremors, that if they ever alarm them again, the brutes, they shall never come here again; that is all."

"Never come here again!" I hope some of them will never dare. Oh, Augustus, keep your forbearance, your tenderness, for your little spoiled wife—not for them; resent, punish such insult as you forgave to-day."

"Resent, punish," is that the advice?" he asked gently caressing her. "Forget all the rude brutes that have disgraced themselves and terrified you this evening!"

She was soothed, not satisfied. All the next week there were no suppers. At the end of the week, a handsome set of jewels arrived for Amelia. It was with a gay affectionate smile that her husband displayed them before her. She had, just at this time, an almost childish passion for dress; this was, of course, the greater for its novelty; and, amused by her baubles, she almost ceased to think of the incident that had troubled her so much at the supper.

A dinner-party was given, at which, among other guests, appeared General Hotspur; but notwithstanding her husband's warning to her, and his gay and smiling request to her, to be courteous to all his guests, she met the general with a freezing hauteur, that with all his arrogance, seriously discomposed that gentleman's self-possession. At the end of the dinner, Augustus looked grave and displeased, for the first time in their married life; and Amelia was unhappy. For what purpose could he be so servile to an arrogant and purse-proud man, who had grossly insulted him? And why should a man like General Hotspur appear again at the table of a host whom he had degraded with such epithets as "sharpener, blackleg?" But the latter question was more easily answered. Few, indeed, could resist the fascinations of Augustus Upham's sunshiny temper and sparkling wit, and that singular look of candour in his broad white brow, with its clustering black curls.

Weeks passed, and still the handsome, gay man drew constantly around him the gentry of the neighbourhood. Amelia had great concentrateness of mind. Any important idea that once seized her, possessed, absorbed her. Little things were constantly occurring to feed and keep alive the suspicion excited by the quarrel at supper. As winter advanced toward spring, she could but observe that the ladies neglected her. Proud and shy, she kept at home. Her husband was amassing large sums of money, she knew—by what means, she did not know. The warm, affectionate, confiding intercourse that had hitherto existed between them, was cooling. It was not, she felt it, from any declension of love on either side; it was because some wrong thing had come between them.

One day Augustus had a large dinner-party. The company sat late over their wine; and then kept up their revels all night. Amelia did not sleep at all. The noise heightened her mental anxiety, and kept her awake. At dawn of day, the wild disorderly company broke up. Her husband came, gay, laughing, roystering, but sober, up-stairs, stopped his wife's questioning with a kiss, and began to pack his portmanteau for a journey.

"Why, where are you going?"

"Away on sudden business," he answered; and the next hour he was off, sure enough. She afterward discovered that the "sudden business" was the deposit of a large sum of money in a bank, which he did not deem it safe to keep about the house. In the course of that day a carriage rolled into the yard. A venerable lady, clothed in black, descended from it, and leaning on the arm of a young, fragile girl, tottered feebly toward the house.

Amelia, from the windows of her sitting-room, recognized Mrs. Richmond and her grand-daughter, Mrs. Hotspur, the youthful wife of General Hotspur. This was the first visit Amelia had received for many months; and it took her rather by surprise. She threw a large thin shawl about her shoulders, and went to meet them. They were already in the parlour. There was a gravity upon the face of the old lady, a distress upon that of the young one, that startled my sister with a vague presentiment. She went up to them and welcomed them, courteously offering her hand. The old lady gravely withdrew hers, and immediately opened the subject of her visit. She spoke in severe terms of their having allured her son-in-law to their house—led him into intoxication and gambling, and won large sums of money from him; of his having, the preceding night, been made drunk, and swindled out of an immense amount of money. Shocked and indignant, Amelia said it was not to be supposed that she knew anything about her husband's

amusements among his gentlemen guests—but that it was very absurd to hint, far less to say, that he, who was almost a boy in years and in thoughtlessness, should be able to tempt a veteran sinner like General Hotspur.

"Ah, you think we don't know. You think we are deceived by your affectation of youthful simplicity. But we know—all the neighbourhood knows that you two are in league; that your husband is as great a rogue as you are; that with your youth, beauty, wit, fascinations, you charm all the young, and delude all the old of the neighbourhood, to their destruction. Every one knows that you keep a gambling-house, and the authorities are already advised of this circumstance. And I come to counsel you to refund, and save yourselves from the vengeance of the law, and my unfortunate son-in-law from utter ruin."

Language can ill describe the strongly mingled emotions of scorn, anger, suspicion, and shame, that raged in the high-spirited woman's bosom. She grew white. She arose from her chair, tottered to the corner of the chimney-piece and pulled the bell-rope. A servant entered.

"Show these women out!" she said, with cold white lips, and trembling, left the room.

A fortnight after, when Augustus returned, he found her dangerously ill.

She recovered.

But nothing could arrest the course of her husband. If it were a fact that he drew men to their ruin with an irresistible fascination—it was also a fatal truth that he himself was the charmed victim of a passion, a fiend who was his tyrant.

I described my sister as possessing a high spirit, ardent temperament, great concentration of mind, and intensity of feeling. It was in vain, now, that Augustus sought, by his charming caresses and sparkling sallies of wit, to beguile her thoughts and feelings from dwelling on the disgraceful facts recently confirmed to her. Perhaps no one, not even her husband—ah, least of all he—no one but myself, her companion from the cradle, could estimate the violence of the struggle that now convulsed her soul—the struggle between her passionate attachment to her husband, and the high uncompromising sense of honour that urged her to oppose to the death all that was evil in his character and conduct.

He had been to her a sort of oracle—an embodiment of her ideal of moral and intellectual excellence. But now she discovered, with what extreme anguish of soul, few who did not know her would understand—that her beautiful, her accomplished, her most excellent one, for whom in her fond and blind idolatry she had abandoned her home and her religion, whom in her madness she had suffered to take the place of all intermediate between her soul and God—was—what? Gambler, cheat, coward. She never, even in her thoughts, degraded him with these names, yet this was what she gradually felt him to be, even as she would feel the approach of death—for it killed her. But I am anticipating. As she recovered temporarily from her illness—the orgies at their house were revived in tenfold energy. She utterly, and to the death, as I said, opposed them. Had she not loved Augustus so truly, taken his faults to heart so bitterly, suffered, one might say, all the bitter remorse and humiliation he should have suffered; had she been content, as some women are, comfortably to take all the good her husband could bring her, and quietly to wash her hands of all the evil through which it came, then she might have been happy in this world—might at least have been free from personal inconvenience, personal violence; for he loved her if he loved anything. Perhaps she did not go the right way to work, to reclaim him. Perhaps she could not reclaim him at all. At all events, when once assured of his vice, when once all the barriers of esteem and delicacy were thrown down between them, she bitterly upbraided him; sternly and stubbornly setting her face against his proceedings. His good-humour was great, but not invincible. This opposition from her at last aroused his anger, and many quarrels occurred between them. She was no patient, resigned victim; neither was she a weeping and wailing one. No; the same fire of temperament, that burned with such intense devotion when fed by religion, blazed fiercely now when blown by righteous anger, for it was righteous in itself, only evil in its excess. Often when he would be holding his revels below, she would suddenly appear amidst them, her eyes blazing with indignation, and by the mere power of her moral force, however injudiciously exerted, disperse the revellers; but oh, these scenes would be followed by others of great, of revolting violence. When once the guests had departed, and they were alone together, the beautiful, fascinating gentleman would be transformed into a perfect demon of vengeance and cruelty. She was naturally neither saint nor angel, only a beautiful, high-spirited woman; she therefore took no sort of ill-treatment patiently. But, alas! her fragile form did not second her high spirit, and she suffered frightfully at these times. She

might have evaded all this, by leaving him; but she would not do that. Like almost any other unperverted woman, she felt that any sort of a life with her husband, was better than any sort of a life without him only she was determined not to second, but to oppose his evil doings; and so thought Augustus by his wife, and fiercely as they quarrelled, he would have done anything on earth, except give up the gaming-table, before he would have let her go.

So passed the year.

The first of the next January—having, locust-like, stripped the neighbourhood as nearly as he could do it, Augustus left the Rock House under the care of the farmer, and left the county.

His departure was as sudden as a flight.

What I have told you was partly gathered from the lips of the farmer, and afterwards from those of others, some details long afterward from my sister. I inquired where they had gone. The farmer informed me that they had no stationary home, but told me where their last letter was dated from. I wrote to my sister that night, and posted the letter the next morning, at the first post-town I passed on my return home. I bitterly reproached myself for not having visited her neighbourhood before, though it was a very long journey to undertake. I received no answer from my sister. The old farmer died next year—I heard it long after by a mere chance—and the old Rock House was shut up. Several years passed, and still I heard no tidings of Amelia. I thought she was dead. I became extremely interested in my parish; formed a strong and lasting friendship for several of my parishioners, among whom were then old Mrs. Mildred, in the very noon of her life and beauty, and Colonel Redclyffe, who afterwards married Agnes, and became the father of Alice. The two families of Oak Lodge and the Limes gradually took the place of my relations in my heart. They were as dear to me as mother and father, sisters, brothers, and children; and they repaid my love a hundred-fold. I was to them as a son, a brother, or a father. Many years passed away, during which I heard nothing of my sister. Many changes had taken place in my parish. The children I had christened when I first entered upon my clerical duties, were now grown up—some of them married; but there were girls who had married young, and mothers whom I had christened were now bringing their infants to the baptismal font. My sister seemed forgotten. Her name had long since ceased to be mentioned. Her mysterious disappearance with her husband had become a "tale of old times," and I had grown to think of her only as a brilliant and transient light—a meteor that had flashed upon my earlier path of life, and disappeared for ever; as a fierce young spirit early perjured, early rebellious, quickly fallen, and quickly called to her dread account; or, I thought of her distant, unknown grave, where her bones had long since mouldered into dust, when one day, I received sudden news of her that—great God!—that suddenly, unexpectedly, blindly, fatally, led me into the perpetration of that crime, the contemplation of which turned my hair snow-white at forty-seven—the memory of which has darkened all my days with remorse, alarmed all my nights with terror!

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE SECRET CRIME CONTINUED.

Aye! Heaven and earth do cry "Impossible!"
The shuddering angels round the eternal throne,
Veiling themselves in glory, shriek "Impossible!"
But hell doth know it true. *Maturin's Bertram.*

MANY times during the recital of this story, the old man had paused and rested. Now he stopped to take some refreshment, and then, strengthened and calmed by the composing manner of his young attendant, went on with his story:

There is nothing which strikes me with more force than the often utter unconsciousness of a great criminal, before the crime, of the terrible precipice of guilt upon which he stands.

I was one day reading in my small study an illuminated volume of the fourteenth century, that Mrs. Redclyffe, just returned from her bridal tour, had presented to me. My feet were on the hob, for it was a chilly day in September, making a fire pleasant. I was extremely comfortable in mind and body, little dreaming that I was then enjoying my very last hour of earthly ease—that in twenty minutes more a series of events would occur that should deprive all my future of peace. Had any one in that hour of easy enjoyment foretold a sudden calamity of which I should be the victim; a fire that should consume me; a fall from a horse or a carriage, that should kill me; a sudden illness that should carry me off, I should not have been scornfully incredulous at least, for such things happen in some part of the world every week; but, had any prophet or angel foretold a sudden crime of which I should be the perpetrator, I should have been

ready to repel the prophecy in the indignant language of Hazael, "Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?" Well, I was sitting in ease and comparative innocence, when Martha came smiling in—she was a woman of middle age then—and laid upon my reading desk a letter. I took it up carelessly; I had no correspondence of much interest. I started slightly, however, when I noticed the post-mark, Green Mills, the superscription was in a strange hand to me. I broke the seal, and merely read:

"Rock House, near Green Mills, September.

"MY ONLY BROTHER.—If possible you are yet in the land of the living, and yet resident at All Saints, where I shall direct this letter, hasten immediately to

"Your only sister in extremity,

"AMELIA."

I rode like lightning to Roland Mildred's. I borrowed the swiftest horse in his stables, and that same night set out. I rode as for life. Oh, no one knows or could ever know how I loved that long-lost twin sister of mine—my only love from infancy to age. I hurried on, half-delirious with joy, expectancy, and—fear. "Extremity! what extremity?" Extreme illness—death? Should she be dead when I should reach Rock House? I shuddered, and hastened faster on. Perhaps it was only extreme poverty. That indeed might have been reasonably predicted from the wild, improvident course of their lives. Ah! if poverty were the extremity, how easy to spare from my own provision enough to sustain her slender wants—or, had she children? A hundred thoughts, anxieties, anticipations, rushed through my mind, as, day and night, I hurried on, still blaming myself for an unchristian loss of self-possession.

I had nearly killed Roland's valuable horse, by the time I reached Green Mills. I left him exhausted at the inn, and hastened on foot, to Rock House. I knew something of the present condition of the old homestead from hearsay—the house nearly ruined, and standing alone in an acre or so of thistle and weed-covered land—the farm sold and annexed to surrounding large estates—a few small cottages, in which vegetated some wretched servants, past service, who were suffered to keep a foothold on their native soil, and gain a meagre living by trapping small game, fishing, wool-picking, knitting coarse stockings, &c.

That evening—what an evening it was! It was growing dark, and an army of storm clouds were mustering in the northwest as I approached Rock House. I heard the dull booming of the bay against the cliffs like the opening of a cannonading. The naked house loomed large and black through the dusky night. I clambered over the broken heaps of stones that had long ago formed the wall, and with a heavy, heavy, sinking vent, went up to the great door of the formidable-looking black front. I rapped, and my rap echoed mournfully through the vacant and deserted hall. All was dark and silent, and in the stillness I heard the muttering of the coming storm and the booming of the bay. I rapped again, feeling faint with vague terror—again the cannonading of the bay against the cliffs was the only sound that fearfully broke the silence.

I turned the handle of the lock and pushed the door open; it fell with a heavy, loud clang that aroused all the roaring echoes of the cavernous old house. I felt ashamed of the nervousness that shook me like an ague as I passed on over the fallen door, and opening the side door on the right, went into the room that had been the family sitting-room of old. As I entered, the lurid light of a smouldering fire in the ample fireplace revealed the form of an infirm woman who had risen from her seat, still holding on the arm of the chair supporting her frail form.

"Did you not hear me knock?" asked I.

"Hear you knock! No; how should I hear you knock amid the noises of this place? I hear only the wind roaring through the house, window-frames shaking, sashes rattling, shutters sometimes falling off; a door fell just now. But what do you want? He is not here, if you are one of them."

"I want—I want—Is Mrs.—? Do you know whether any of the family of the proprietor are about?"

The woman was looking at me wistfully, searchingly; then, sinking back in her chair, she exclaimed, almost inaudibly:

"My God! my brother!"

"Amelia! Oh, no, no; this is not my sister."

I took her hands and gazed intently into her face. I could read there not one single look of my sister. The features were different, the expression was different. Could this old and haggard woman possibly be Amelia? I was pierced through with a real and painful doubt as, kneeling down before her, I held her hands and gazed into her face.

"Am I so very much changed then?" she asked.

"Changed? You are revolutionized; you are exchanged, if indeed you ever were my sister. Oh, Amelia! my sister, my sister!"

I dropped my head weeping upon her lap, and her hand fell upon mine, and her arms entwined me. When this was over I arose and sat by her side.

"Have you eaten any supper?" she asked.

"No; nor have I any appetite to eat."

"Yet you must do so," she said.

"Heavens, how feeble you seem!" said I, ashamed now that I had let her lift a hand to serve me.

She dropped, trembling and fainting, into the chair; and I saw with grief how much the little effort had fatigued and exhausted her.

She got up and made the tea; put a cake on the table, and invited me to sit down. I did so to please her, forcing an appetite I did not feel.

Oh, it hurt me to hear her talking of small paltry comforts for me, while she herself seemed to try to conceal some great grief that yet her heart-broken look still betrayed.

"My poor sister," I said, "I thank you. But do not trouble yourself about my eating. I shall do well enough. I am neither invalid nor epicurean."

"Ah, well; perhaps I do give 'undue importance' to the subject; but then it is habit. I have been caterer and cook for an epicurean all my life nearly."

This was the second time Amelia had alluded to this fact. I looked inquiringly into her face. Up to this time I had not asked her a question of her life, nor did I intend to trouble her with one, but resolved to wait until she should voluntarily confide in me. I did not even know whether her husband was living or dead; whether, if living, he were with her; whether they had any children; or, indeed, any other fact of her late married life. She replied to my look of interest by saying:

"I wrote to you, my brother, under a sure conviction of approaching death, in order to confide to your care one charge—the child of my old age."

"Your old age, my sister—my twin sister? Why, I am in the prime of life, and the few silver threads mingling with my black hair were whitened by trouble, not time—trouble for you, dear."

"I am sorry for that. Yes, my old age. Some materials wear out sooner than others, and some have harder usages than others. I was of a material quickly worn out, and of a spirit that quickly consumes such; besides, I had much usage and bad usage. I have led a wild life since I saw you last. I am aged at forty-two."

"Ah, my sister, my sweet sister, I know it. I have heard something of your sufferings before you left Rock House. Oh, the wretch!"

"Hush. Let no idle words be spoken. I sent for you to give into your charge the child of my old age, whose advent I am daily expecting—whose birth I can never survive. I am too old, too broken. I have suffered too greatly and for too long a time. I have been the mother of children already, and never possessed two living at the same time. I have seen them perish, one by one, from exposure to the inclemency of the weather in cold climates; from the baleful miasma of hot, unhealthy countries; from want, fatigue, ill-usage, from which I had not always the power to shield them, or neglect which could not always be avoided. Their very graves lie far apart."

"Have you led such a wild, roving life, then, Amelia?"

"Listen!" she said, and then she gave me the following account. I will not repeat what I have already told you, namely, that which I learned from the old farmer, but continue her story from the point at which he left it; or, rather, from an event that occurred before they left the county.

"Things had gone on in this way, after the loss of our first child, from bad to worse, until one day, when I was sitting in my chamber alone, he suddenly ran into the house and up the stairs, and, breathless, said:

"Amelia, prepare instantly to set out with me from here."

"In the name of Heaven, what do you mean?" exclaimed I, terrified at his blanched countenance and trembling frame.

"I have no time for explanations—none; my liberty, my life, depend upon my instant flight; but I will not leave you. Be ready; we must take the packet that passes here in fifteen minutes."

"All the time he spoke he was wildly emptying a wardrobe of its miscellaneous contents, and, rapidly picking them into a trunk, while, with the speed of fear, he locked and strapped it down, and, hastily calling two men, despatched them with it to the beach."

"Fire and flames! Why do you stand gazing there?" he angrily asked of me.

"As one in a bewildered dream, I put on bonnet and cloak, and he, drawing me after him, hurried down and out of the house, and fled to the beach. There, while waiting the passage of the packet, his agitation defies all description. His furtive glances thrown out over the country—his sudden pallor when the sound of horses' feet was heard upon the distant road—all

betrayed the extreme terror of a criminal in mortal fear of pursuit and arrest. The packet passed at length, stopped, put out a boat, took us on board, and, in an hour from the time of my sitting quietly in my chamber, I found myself unexpectedly on board a schooner.

(To be continued.)

CHRISTMAS.

Oh! let it be a blithesome day!

Our hearts beat joyfully,

While sounds of mirth from many a hearth

Proclaim a jubilee;

Come, let us meet, and warmly greet,

And laugh right merrily.

Sober we wish to be, and wise—

The heart is out of tune

That does not dance to friendship's glance,

As green leaves dance in June—

That has no playful holiday,

No soul for sweet commune.

Oh! merry Christmas, joyful time!

Not the good things alone

The festive treats of drinks and meats,

Make us thy presence own;

Some friends of yore are here once more,

Though many now have flown.

Yet still we feel the kindred tie

That binds the sons of earth,

That warms and blends to life-long friends

Beside a neighbour's hearth—

Makes aged sires recall the fires

Of youthfulness and mirth.

Green as the holly branches round

The homes we love and bless,

May every heart some pastime start,

Some dear old friend caress;

May fames of health have souls of wealth,

And present bliss confess.

Oh! let it be a blithesome day—

A happy revelry!

With hearts as warm in human form

As ever met in glee—

As ever bore the mirth of yore

In right good company.

J. E. T.

LAPLAND LOVE-MAKING.

WHEN a young gentleman in Lapland desires to assume new responsibilities, he lays in a large stock of brandy, and his parents, relatives and friends meet in as great numbers as possible, to treat the friends of the bride desired. Neither bride nor bridegroom is expected to betray anxiety or interest in the proceedings, the Arctic Mrs. Grundy, who is very strict in such matters, would be very much scandalized if they should. Besides the great mass of relatives and friends, of aunts and fourth cousins, who must attend, there is a still greater number of outsiders, who are attracted by their curiosity to see whether anybody gets the mitten. The intensity of their curiosity is to some extent determined by the amount of brandy circulating. On the side of the gallant, there is a spokesman called *Sognonaive*. Brandy-flask in hand, he goes over to the other party, and offers liquid hospitality to the father and mother of the young lady. This is a signal for an indiscriminate attack of a similar nature by the entire invading party upon the lady's friends. Everybody drinks to her father, everybody drinks to her mother, and she herself is borne in grateful memory. When all are sufficiently elated, the proposal is embodied in a long speech, vibrating between poetry and prose. Her parents ask to see the *kitch*, the wooing presents. If they are accepted, the matter is settled, and there is nothing more but to go the next day to the parson, to get them published.

Most matches are made at the fairs and great festivals, but they are never made without brandy. Indeed, "courting with brandy" is a proverb among Laplanders equivalent to the French *comme il faut*. When the lady is rich, and the suitor is not, he very often throws his brandy away. The influence of riches in matrimonial matters is nowhere felt more strongly than here; dress counts for nothing; one sheep-skin is as good as another. Rank is determined only by the number of reindeers a man owns. Practically, marriage is a mere matter of bargain and sale. Still, the Laplanders recognize the sacredness of the relation in their way. The silver which they pay for their bride must not be in the shape of six-dollars—it must be made up into ornaments. This is better than nothing. If a marriage is broken off, the party who takes a divorce generally returns the bridal presents, and the more conscientious add a gift for the wasted brandy. So, too, when the parents say "no," many are so generous as to pay for the brandy. As all the relatives have a word to say, there is generally a good

deal of quarrelling before the answer is agreed upon, and some management is required, oftentimes to make it favourable.

WHALES.

MANY whales were blowing in Maggie Bay. Some of them appeared to be monsters sixty to seventy feet in length. The immediate presence of so many whales was rather exciting to the captain, who began to fight his battles over again, and tell us some whale stories. The west end of Anticosti is particularly distinguished for the number and size of the whales which frequent it.

Two years ago, the captain informed us that he passed a schooner towing an immense sulphur-bottomed whale to Mingan Harbour, and that the captors were three days before they succeeded in getting the gigantic creature into safe quarters. When measured, it was found to be 100 feet long, and yielded 220 barrels of oil, but the whalersmen thought that they had lost 120 barrels by the sharks which were feeding on the carcass as the schooner was towing it to Mingan.

At Bradore, near the Straits of Belle Isle, the hump-backed whale, or the river-whale of the Americans, has frequently been taken seventy feet in length, and produced 300 barrels of oil, and thirty-seven hundred-weight of bone. Five different species of whales frequent the gulf; they are the black whale, the hump-backed, the sulphur-bottomed, the finner, and white whale. The whales in the gulf are generally from Gaspé Bay, and employ about 200 seamen in ten schooners. The value of the Gaspé whale fishery is now estimated at £7,000 a-year.

The white whale, *Beluga borealis*, is really a beautiful animal. The white whale is found from fourteen to twenty-two feet in length. It yields from 100 to 120 gallons of oil, which possesses the valuable property of retaining perfect fluidity at temperatures below zero, and is therefore very valuable for light-house purposes. Leather has been manufactured from the skin of the white whale, (erroneously called the white porpoise), which commands a sale at eight shillings the pound. The white whale is caught in strong fish-pounds, at and near the mouth of the river Ouelle, a tributary of the Lower St. Lawrence, at the Isle au Coudres, and at Point de Carle, on the north shore of the river. In the fall of the year they assemble, and migrate in a body to their winter quarters in the gulf or Arctic Sea. They live from April to October in the brackish water of the Lower St. Lawrence, and others proceed slowly down the estuary, accustoming themselves to the salt water.

Mr. Tétu, who has been very successful in capturing the white whale, and bringing its oil and leather into notice, informed me that he has seen the St. Lawrence "white with them;" and he has observed them passing towards the gulf all day long over a space of twelve miles broad. The white whale is common in Hudson's Bay, and efforts have been made by the Hudson's Bay Company to turn this curious and very interesting animal to account. It is also met with in Ungava Bay, and is captured by the Esquimaux in the following simple manner.

A large *dan* or seal-skin inflated with air is attached to the harpoon by a thong some twenty feet in length. The moment the fish is struck the *dan* is thrown overboard, and, being dragged through the water, offers so great a resistance to the movements of the whale that it soon becomes exhausted, and when it emerges it is compelled to rest for a short time before diving again. The Esquimaux, with lightning speed, approaches in his kayak, and secures his prize with a thrust of the spear.

The story of the body of a whale having been devoured by sharks whilst it was being towed to Mingan, induced me to ask the captain whether sharks were numerous in the Gulf. He replied:

"Pretty numerous, and I've cause to be thankful for it."

"Why?"

"I was on board an American Government vessel, some ten years ago or more; our provisions were well nigh out, when one afternoon, as we were in the Gulf Stream, we caught a shark. The doctor cut him up, but when the men were about to throw the pieces overboard, he said, 'Just shove those pieces of meat into the empty pork barrel; we may want them yet. I don't like the looks of that sky.' The men laughed and did so; but night came, and with night a storm that drove us far away from land, and left us helpless as a log in the wide ocean. Our provisions gave out, and then we lived for eighteen days on that pickled shark, which the doctor told the men just to put into the empty pork barrels, because he didn't like the looks of the sky."—*Explorations in the Interior of the Labrador Peninsula.* By Henry Youle Hind, M.A., F.R.G.S.

REMOVAL OF THE STATUE OF NAPOLEON I.—The statue of Napoleon I., lately removed from the Place

Vendôme, having been cleaned and repaired, has been placed on its new pedestal at the Rond Point of Courbevoie. As it now stands at a height of only thirty feet from the ground, it looks to greater advantage than it did in its former position at an elevation of upwards of 130 feet.

SCIENCE.

PROGRESS OF THE IRON TRADE IN THE NORTH.

—It is stated by the northern papers that Sir W. Armstrong has purchased or leased extensive ironstone beds in the neighbourhood of Bellingham. The old ironworks at Ridsdale-ter are not unlikely soon to be again in active operation, under happier and more successful management than the last. The ironworks at Bishopwearmouth also are about to be re-opened, which will be a great boon to the industrial and trading classes of that part of Sunderland. The iron trade of this district, indeed, extends with almost unparalleled rapidity. Including the Consett furnaces, there are already eighty-one blast furnaces in the Cleveland district, and preparations are making for building fifteen more. The quantity of ironstone sent from the Eston mines, for the first six months of the year, averaged not less than 13,000 tons per week. In one month the quantity reached as high as 14,000 tons per week! There is every reason to believe that if the trade continues to extend for the next ten years as it has done during the last, that the Tees-side will be the largest iron-making district in the United Kingdom.

IRON.

WHEN Captain Cook and the early navigators first sailed into the South Seas on their voyages of discovery, one of the things that struck them with most surprise was the avidity which the natives displayed for iron.

"Nothing would go down with our visitors," says Cook, "but metal; and iron was their beloved article." A nail would buy a good-sized pig; and on one occasion the navigator bought some four hundred pounds of fish for a few wretched knives improvised out of an old hoop.

"For iron tools," says Captain Carteret, "we might have purchased everything upon the Freewill Islands that we could have brought away. A few pieces of old iron hoop presented to one of the natives threw him into an ecstasy little short of distraction."

At Otaheite the people were found generally well-behaved and honest; but they were not proof against the fascinations of iron. Captain Cook says that one of them, after resisting all other temptations, "was at length ensnared by the charms of a basket of nails." Another lurked about for several days, watching the opportunity to steal a coal rake.

The navigators found they could pay their way from island to island merely with scraps of iron, which were as useful for the purpose as gold coins would have been in Europe. The drain, however, being continuous, Captain Cook became alarmed at finding his currency almost exhausted; and he relates his joy on recovering an old anchor which the French Captain Bougainville had lost at Bolabola, on which he felt as an English banker would do after a severe run upon him for gold, when suddenly placed in possession of a fresh store of bullion.

The avidity for iron displayed by these poor islanders will not be wondered at when we consider that whoever among them was so fortunate as to obtain possession of an old nail, immediately became a man of greater power than his fellows, and assumed the rank of a capitalist. "An Otaheitan chief," says Cook, "who had got two nails in his possession, received no small emolument by letting out the use of them to his neighbours for the purpose of boring holes when their own methods failed, or were thought too tedious."

The native methods referred to by Cook were of a very clumsy sort; the principal tools of the Otaheitan being of wood, stone, and flint. Their adzes and axes were of stone. The gouge most commonly used by them was made out of the bone of the human forearm. Their substitute for a knife was a shell, or a bit of flint or jasper. A shark's tooth, fixed to a piece of wood, served for an awger; a piece of coral for a file; and the skin of a sting-ray for a polisher. Their saw was made of jagged fishes' teeth fixed on the convex edge of a piece of hard wood.

Their weapons were of a similarly rude description; their clubs and axes were headed with stone, and their lances and arrows were tipped with flint. Fire was another agency employed by them, usually in boat-building. Thus, the New Zealanders, whose tools were also of stone, wood, or bone, made their boats of the trunks of trees hollowed out by fire.

The stone implements were fashioned, Captain Cook says, by rubbing one stone upon another until brought to the required shape; but, after all, they

were very inefficient for their purpose. They soon became blunted and useless; and the laborious process of making new tools had to be begun again. The delight of the islanders at being put in possession of a material which was capable of taking a comparatively sharp edge and keeping it, may therefore readily be imagined, and hence the remarkable incidents to which we have referred in the experience of the early voyagers.

In the minds of the natives, iron became the representative of power, efficiency, and wealth; and they were ready almost to fall down and worship their new tools, esteeming the axe as a deity, offering sacrifices to the saw, and holding the knife in especial veneration.

In the infancy of all nations the same difficulties must have been experienced for want of tools, before the art of smelting and working in metals had become known; and it is not improbable that the Phœnician navigators, who first frequented our coasts, found the same avidity for bronze and iron existing among the poor wood-stained Britons, who flocked down to the shore to see their ships, and exchange food and skins with them, that Captain Cook, discovered more than two thousand years later, among the natives of Otaheite and New Zealand. For the tools and weapons found in ancient burying-places in all parts of Britain, clearly show that these islands also have passed through the epoch of stone and flint.

There was recently exhibited, at the Crystal Palace, a collection of ancient European weapons and implements, placed alongside a similar collection of articles brought from the South Seas; and they were in most respects so much alike, that it was difficult to believe that they did not belong to the same race and period, instead of being the implements of races sundered by half the globe, and living at periods more than two thousand years apart.

Nearly every weapon in the one collection had its counterpart in the other—the mauls or celts of stone, the spearheads of flint or jasper, the arrowheads of flint or bone, and the saws of jagged stone—showing how human ingenuity, under like circumstances, had resorted to like expedients.

It would also appear that the ancient tribes in these islands, like the New Zealanders, used fire to hollow out their larger boats; several specimens of this kind of vessel having recently been dug up in the valleys of the Witham and the Clyde, some of the latter from under the very streets of modern Glasgow. Their smaller boats, or coracles, were made of osiers interwoven, covered with hides, and rigged with leathern sails and thong tackle.—*Industrial Biography: Iron Workers and Tool Makers.* By Samuel Smiles.

RESERVOIR PAINTING-BRUSH.—Messrs. Crowden and Garrod have recently patented a painting-brush, the advantages of which, in comparison with the usual kind, is that it is made of first-class bristles selected for the purpose; its shape is nearly flat, and set in thin copper binding, and firmly cemented; it uses evenly, and in one way; and is made to deliver the colour with regularity on the work. The most remarkable feature of the invention is, that the centre of the brush forms a small chamber for the paint, which is worked up to the flag or top of the brush by the arrangement of the bristles, which are so placed to effect this purpose, that, while the brush is in use, it is working the colour to the surface, and never becoming clogged. In flattening and stippling, so great an advantage of laying the colour with smoothness, will and must be appreciated by every decorator. The workmen using one of these brushes, will be enabled to cover one-half more space, use less colour, and produce a better result on the work in the same amount of time.

CASTING HEAVY GUNS.—The principle involved in the construction of ordnance on the Rodman system, is simply that of cooling the core round which the metal is poured by passing a current of cold water through it; thus equalizing the contraction, and adding enormously to the strength of the gun. The system has not as yet been adopted in this country, and therefore the following, for which we are indebted to the *Pittsburgh Dispatch*, is not devoid of interest:—We have already noticed the fact that preparations were progressing at the Fort Pitt Works, in this city, for the manufacture of 20-in. guns, the lathe, patterns, &c., being in an advanced condition. As the experiment of manufacturing a gun of such a calibre, however, is one of great risk, it was determined to settle at least one point practically before attempting to mould the great gun, by melting at a single heat, nearly the same quantity of metal as would be required for the 20-in. For this purpose, two guns were moulded of the 15-inch navy pattern, and each furnished with a 12-in. instead of a 15-in., hollow core, making the round weight of each of the guns nearly as great as the columbiad 15-in. These moulds were placed side by side in the pits of the new foundry, and five of the furnaces in the foundry were charged—three for the

special purpose of casting great guns, and two for the ordinary work of the shop. The respective weights of these enormous furnaces, being 84, 19, 13, and 18½ tons—an aggregate of nearly 94 tons. 72 tons of this metal, being the charge of the three large furnaces, were designed for the casting of the experimental guns. The metal was led from each of these furnaces to a large pool, equidistant from each of the moulds, and communicating by two "runners" with the two "gates" of each. About mid-day, the three furnaces were tapped in quick succession, and in a moment three streams of molten iron were pouring into the pool, from which, as the metal rose to the level of the openings, two fiery lines shot into each of the moulds. Notwithstanding the unusually risky character of the experiment, everything passed off successfully, and the streams of hot metal and cold water, crossing and interlacing on their way, poured into the moulds without accident.

THE EMPEROR (says the *Presse*) has granted from his privy purse a pension of 6,000*fr.* a year to the mother of Middle. Emma Livry, and a sum of 40,000*fr.* to defray the expenses attendant on the lamented artist's illness.

MUSEUM OF OLD CLOTHES IN THE HARTLEY INSTITUTE, SOUTHAMPTON.—One room in the Hartley Institute, at Southampton, is set apart for the preservation of the wardrobe and furniture of the mother of Mr. Hartley, the founder of the Institute, in accordance with the eccentric will of that gentleman. In this room may be seen bonnets, dresses, shoes, tapestry, fans, drawers, china, chairs, &c., of a wealthy merchant's wife of the last century. The bonnets are of the Sairey Gamp style, the shoes of satin, with small wooden heels, and displaying the neatness and elaborate workmanship which were lavished by the sons of St. Crispin on such feet coverings. The fans are large and clumsy, and one has the Lord's Prayer printed on it.

A LOST LEGACY.—In 1834, Sir James Graham left the ministry, on account of the decision of the Cabinet to entertain the question of appropriation of Church property to secular purposes. In the first week of June, 1834, Mr. George Blamire, a native of Cumberland, differing from Sir James Graham as to politics, and very much opposed to him, a barrister of Lincoln's Inn, appears to have been so pleased with Sir James Graham for abandoning office and quitting his party upon principle, urged by a conscientious sense of duty, that he then made his will, leaving to Sir James Graham absolutely all his real and personal property, worth perhaps £40,000. Mr. George Blamire died in the summer of 1863, and his will has been proved, but Sir James Graham having died in October, 1861, the legacy lapses, and Mr. George Blamire's property will be divided among his next of kin.

RAILWAY CLAUSES.—An Act was passed in the last session to consolidate certain provisions usually inserted in railway Acts. It will take effect in the next session, when numerous railway Bills will be brought before the House of Commons. The Act is divided into parts relating to the construction of railways, the extension of time for the purchase of land and construction of works, the working agreements, steam-vessels, and the amalgamation of railways. The Act provides that, for the greater convenience and safety of the public, companies must erect and maintain lodges at points of crossing, and the speed of travelling at such places is to be regulated by the Board of Trade. For neglect, a penalty of £20 is to be incurred, and a penalty of £10 for every day during which the offence is continued. The effect of this statute will be to shorten railway Acts.

THE RUSSIAN BALL AT NEW YORK.—How much did it all cost? Not that anybody cares, of course. We wanted to treat, and we have done it, and would have done it, if it had had to cost twenty-two, and a quarter times as much as it did. Yet it is an American characteristic to want to see the figures: so we give an estimate: Dresses, laces, &c., bought for the occasion, at a moderate average, 250,000 *dols.*; masculine purchases, at same, 50,000 *dols.*; jewellery, 1,000,000 *dols.*; bouquets, 3,000 *dols.*; coiffures, friseurs, &c., 2,000 *dols.*; supper for 2,000, with wine, 20,000 *dols.*; expense of Academy, decorations, &c., 10,000 *dols.*; carriages, 5,000 *dols.*; total 1,340,000 *dols.* It is to be expected that the jewellery and most of the dresses will, of course, be good for any other minor occasion, but this ball caused most of the original outlay. We omitted to mention in our report that in the ladies' toilet-room some 50 young women were seated round the room armed with needles, cotton, bodkins, &c.; they assisted the ladies to disrobe themselves of their superfluous attire, and were in attendance all the evening to mend a sudden rip or smooth down an unlooked-for tear. The dressing-rooms for the gentlemen were on the third tier, and were plentifully supplied with barbers, bootblacks, &c.



[SIR RASHLEIGH BRANDON MAKES A FRUITLESS SEARCH.]

SIBYL'S CLIFF.

CHAPTER VI.
FOUND DROWNED.

TURN we now to the death-struggle which on the night of Arthur's visit to Oakland Manor, took place on Sibyl's Cliff, and to what followed on the succeeding morning.

"For the love of God, for the sake of your own soul," gasped Arthur, whilst in the grasp of the assassin, "whoever you are, spare me. Spare me, for the sake of my wife and child.

No reply. Inexorable as fate, the physical force of his assailant was unrelaxed and triumphant.

At that moment the moon, unveiled by one of the caprices of this weird and fatal night, burst forth in bright effulgence, and as with the light of day brought out in full relief the features of the midnight assassin.

"Rashleigh Brandon!" shrieked the victim. "Oh, cousin, spare me for the sake of old times, for the sake of the love that I and mine have borne you. Spare me, and I will never reveal what you have attempted this night—spare me, and you shall have half my fortune."

"Fool! I will have all or none!" cried Sir Rashleigh. "It was written, ages ago, that I should be lord of Oakland, and the architect of my own destiny. We are both accomplishing our fates."

"Will nothing move you?" cried Arthur, terrified even in this supreme hour, by the superhuman energy and relentless will of this demon in human shape.

"Nothing!" was the reply.

Sir Rashleigh had overmastered all resistance, and now held his victim poised on the edge of the cliff with a sort of devilish pleasure at his agony.

That agony, however, was of brief duration. In view of the certainty of his fate—horrible as it was—a strange calm possessed the spirit of the heir of Oakland. "Rashleigh!" he said, "from this moment you shall know no peace. If the dead are permitted to visit the earth, my presence shall haunt you day and night. If you win wealth by this foul deed, it shall profit you nothing. Every coin, stained with the blood of a friend and kinsman, shall burn your flesh like fire; and when, by the hand of man or by that of Providence you are sent to your dread account, you shall find me at the judgment-seat waiting to accuse you."

These were the last words that Arthur uttered. Suddenly opening his arms, the assassin released his victim, whose equilibrium was then destroyed. One instant the moon gleamed on a face white with agony

and despair—the next that face had disappeared below the line of rock.

There was no splash heard—for the wild din of the ocean was loud as the loudest thunder—but Sir Rashleigh thought he heard, nay, he did hear, a sharp cry of despair, audible because pitched in a higher key than the deep diapason of the angry waters.

The murderer stood for a long time motionless as a statue. What were his thoughts and feelings none can ever know.

At last he roused himself, and clinging to the stump of a tree, bent far over the edge of the cliff, gazed intently down upon the weltering wave now illuminated by the broad light of the full moon. Nothing but rock and water were visible, although any dark, floating object would have been distinctly seen. The reflux tide had carried out to sea the mute evidence of his crime.

He breathed freer, looked round for his cloak which he had dropped from his shoulders when he sprang out of the bushes, and recovering the garment, threw it around him, then, after wiping from his brow the perspiration caused by the tremendous physical and mental struggle from which he had just emerged, he plunged into the shrubbery, and by paths well known to himself, regained the manor-house.

He re-entered the domain by the same gate through which he had issued forth, crossed the park under cover of the trees, silently entered the house, and stole up to his room. All was silent as the grave. Undressing himself, he lay down upon his bed, but not to sleep.

The morning following opened with a brilliancy all the more grateful and striking from its contrast with the tempestuous weather of the day before.

Sir George Franklin was the first of his household to greet the rising sun, and the first, after a long walk about his grounds, to make his appearance in the breakfast-room. Mrs. Bell soon came in to assume her ministering duties, and the solemn Glosser, still swelling with indignation at the repulse of the previous night, followed her example.

Sir Rashleigh kept the table so long waiting, that the baronet finally, after despatching a peremptory summons to his nephew, sat down without him. Before long, however, Sir Rashleigh appeared, dressed with the scrupulous neatness which always characterized him, whatever the occasion. He was always pale—but on this day appeared paler than usual, so that his uncle noticed the fact. It was readily explained by the young man. He had been absorbed in the perusal of a new work, and it was almost morning before he got to bed and asleep.

"Ah! Rashleigh," said the baronet, shaking his head. "No good will ever come of your making a bookworm of yourself. Go to bed early, rise early, take a brisk gallop on the downs—throw care and study to the dogs, and you'll live a century, as I expect to do. It is pitiful to see a lad of your thews and sinews putting his stamina to such trials as you do. You have stood it very well so far; I admit. You're a very pretty man of your inches, as the highlanders say, and in a tussle with a man of your weight, I should be willing to bet the odds on you."

There was something in the last remark which jarred on the conscience of Rashleigh, and imparted a paler hue to his cheek. He thought of the death-struggle on Sibyl's Cliff.

Sir George turned from his nephew to the butler.

"It was a hard storm last night, Glosser," he said.

"Sir George, it was a crusher," replied the butler,

with his ponderous emphasis.

"Any lives lost, Glosser?"

"None that I have heard of, Sir George."

"There can have been no lives lost?" said Sir Rashleigh, suddenly. "The storm was a long time brewing, and sailors had an opportunity to get a good offing."

"Yet there are always some venturesome fishermen, poor fellows, caught napping in such heavy weather," said Sir George. "I'm afraid we shall hear of more than one body washed upon the sands by the tide."

There was one body, Rashleigh thought, that might come to light in this way—one ghastly, mute accuser that all the waters of the German Ocean could not hide. The sea is sometimes treacherous, and does not always keep the secrets committed to its charge.

"Rashleigh! what's the matter with you?" cried the baronet; "in a brown study again? Decidedly your wits are gone a wool-gathering."

"Did you speak, Sir George?"

"A pretty question! Are you deaf? I spoke twice, before you noticed me. When you have finished your breakfast (and, by the way, you seem to have no appetite this morning—all comes of your book-reading at night), I should like to have a little serious conversation with you. We will stroll out into the park."

"I am at your service, Sir George, and I have quite finished my breakfast. I have, as you say, no appetite this morning."

Sir George rose from the table, and took his hat and cane, and his nephew was also as promptly ready for the walk. It was his usual custom to offer the support of his arm to his uncle, but now he seemed to shrink

away from him, and the latter was compelled to ask his aid.

They left the house and proceeded some distance in silence, each occupied by his own thoughts. At last they halted and sat down upon a rustic bench, overshadowed by a grape arbour, and Sir George opened the conversation.

"Rashleigh," said he, "I thought I could keep a secret, but I find good news as burdensome as bad. Perhaps, after all, my garrulity is excusable, for you are deeply interested in this matter."

Rashleigh simply bowed. His uncle went on: "Last night a stranger came to see me near midnight. Can you guess his name?"

"I was never good at guessing," answered Sir Rashleigh, faintly.

"Then I won't perplex you with riddles. But, strange as it may appear, my poor wandering boy—poor Arthur—came back last night to his home."

"And what explanation, sir, did he offer for his cruel conduct?"

"I asked none, for I knew too well. The lad has a spirit as high as myself, and had my father used me as I did poor Arthur, I, too, would have left his roof."

"Then I am to understand, sir, that my erring cousin is fully forgiven?" Sir Rashleigh forced himself to say.

"Fully—completely."

"But how is it that I did not meet him this morning? Is he in the house, sir?"

"No, he left as he came, in the dead of the night. But he will be back to-day or to-morrow."

"Are you sure of that, Sir George?"

"Of course I am; as sure of it as that the sun will rise to-morrow. Have you any idea that I shall not see him again?"

"I thought," replied Sir Rashleigh, whose iron will enabled him to speak with a calm voice and an unruffled brow, "that perhaps, he was still as erratic as ever; that a momentary compunction might have led him hither, but that his strange love of wandering reassumed its sway over him, as soon as he had satisfied himself that you were still alive and well."

"No, no, Rashleigh, you are mistaken, I tell you," said the baronet. "He knows, he must know, from the warmth of my reception, that, if he had left me a second time, he would surely break my poor old heart, and bring down my grey hairs in sorrow to the grave!"

Sir Rashleigh could make no reply to this. He could not even bear the look of the old man, his own foul deed had rendered childless.

"Rashleigh," said Sir George, grasping his hand, "you have a good heart, though you appear cold to strangers. I know that you rejoice that my troubles are over."

"I do sincerely, uncle."

"Although you probably suppose," continued the baronet, "that this unexpected return of my son will ruin your worldly interests."

"I never thought of them, Sir George."

"I dare say not. Give you books enough, and you're completely happy, in your way. But you have been a son to me, and it would not be right if I ceased to be a father to you the moment my son came back. Now, I tell you what I mean to do. My fortune is so ample that I can afford to be liberal. I mean that you and Arthur shall share equally what I possess."

"My generous benefactor!"

"Don't speak in that way, my dear boy; I am simply performing an act of duty in making such a division of my property. I dare say you and Arthur will get along very well together in the old manor-house, for the very reason that your tastes are so different that you can never be rivals. And don't fancy, young man, that I mean to keep either of you on short allowance while I live. And, by the way, that puts me in mind, I am very forgetful, that I have given you nothing for a long time. So just accept this pocket-book; I don't care how soon you spend the contents, I'll fill it up whenever it's empty; there's plenty more where that comes from."

He offered Sir Rashleigh a pocket-book apparently filled with bank-notes. The young man shrank from his uncle's side and waved back his proffered hand. How could he take the money?

"Take it!" cried Sir George, peremptorily, "or you'll put me in a passion directly. Take it, or I shall think you want to drive me into apoplexy, and so come the sooner into possession of your fortune. You know my doctor tells me to avoid undue excitement."

"Well, sir," said Rashleigh, recklessly, "since you insist upon it, I accept it. I accept your generosity with many thanks. Your bounty will enable me to do a world of good."

"That's like you, Rashleigh," replied the baronet, with a smile. "Always thinking of others and never of yourself. And now we've explained matters, give me your arm, and I'll hobble back to the house, for I

must see that Arthur's apartments are made ready for his reception."

By the hall-door, Sir Rashleigh parted with his uncle, and, going to the stable, ordered his groom to saddle his favourite horse. The steed, a powerful, fiery black, was soon caparisoned, and Sir Rashleigh mounted. He passed out of the park, curbing his horse into a walk, but he was no sooner on the high road, than he slackened the rein, and permitted the animal to launch forth into a wild gallop. Up hill and down dale he sped, heedless of acclivity or hollow, careless whither he went, provided always that his path lay where he could see the tossing waters and hear their wild thunder, for they harmonized with the tempestuous thoughts that were warring in his mind. He was conscious of nothing external, but the rapid motion of his horse and the thunderous surging of the German Ocean. All at once he found himself descending upon the banks of the cove that indented the village of Claremont.

High up on the beach was a line of fishing boats, the sea being too rough to permit their owners to pursue their ordinary vocations. In the rear of the boats were the huts occupied by the fishermen and their families.

On ordinary days of idleness the amphibious people of the seaside were to be seen in groups at the doors of these rude habitations, mending nets, gossiping, or smoking; but now the houses seemed utterly deserted.

A second glance showed Sir Rashleigh that the men, women, and children of the settlement were all gathered at a point of the beach about half a mile distant. Impelled by a curiosity he could not account for to himself, he galloped on to this place to ascertain the cause of the gathering. There was no excitement, no talking among the people, even the women's tongues were hushed; but every face wore a serious and awe-struck expression.

Sir Rashleigh reined up his horse and asked a fisherman who was standing on the outskirts of the crowd, the occasion of the gathering.

"A body found upon the beach, sir," replied the man, touching his hat respectfully. "The coroner has been a holding of an inquest."

"Was it one of your people?"

He waited the answer with anxiety.

"No, sir, we have missed nobody."

"Has the body been identified?"

"No, sir; it appears to be the body of a stranger; but so disfigured that it is hardly fit to look upon," the man added, with a slight shudder.

"Were there no papers found upon the person of this unfortunate man?"

"Nothing, sir, but a pocket-knife and a few shillings."

"Had the body been long in the water, think you?"

"No, sir; only a few hours, the doctor thought."

"Hold my horse a moment," said Sir Rashleigh, as he sprang from the saddle and tossed the rein to the fisherman.

When Sir Rashleigh arrived at the place where the inquest was being held, his nerve failed him, and he did not pursue the resolution which he had formed, to witness the body. From what description he had given him, however, he believed it to be his cousin Arthur, and left the scene, pondering various plans by which he might the most naturally conceal the crime of which he had been guilty. He heard of the verdict, being "found drowned," and was made acquainted where the body was interred; and as he had not seen it, and having some misgivings that it might not be the body of the heir of Oakland Manor, he determined, before the mould which covered it had yet settled, to visit the grave, remove it from the coffin, and see with his own eyes the victim of his treachery. However disfigured the features might be, he would still easily recognize the form.

Accordingly, when his plans had been thoroughly digested, he set out at midnight upon his mission, and after various turnings, finally reached the corner of the churchyard where the remains of his victim had been deposited the day before. Here he lay down and put his ear to the earth, listening intently. No sound was audible but the dull and distant dashes of the ever-sounding sea upon the shore. Summoning up all his resolution for the work he had assumed, he lighted his lantern, and placed it where its rays fell full upon the new-made mound that covered all that was left of the heir of Oakland Manor.

Seizing the spade, he commenced digging with such fury that in an incredibly short space of time he had made a broad, long, and deep excavation. A few more strokes of the spade, and the iron rang upon the coffin-lid. The perspiration rained from his brow, and bathed his limbs, but he paused not a moment to rest. The entire coffin was soon laid bare. Changing the position of the lantern so that it illumined the narrow trench, he now resorted to the chisel and wrench, and prised off the lid of the coffin. As the light fell upon the interior, a low cry of despair broke

from his lips. The coffin was empty. The body had already been removed. By whom?

The natural supposition would have been that some surgeon had appropriated the corpse of an entire stranger. But no such rational solution suggested itself to the mind of the murderer. It is one of the common consequences of a crime like his, that the most logical mind is warped from its bias, and refuses to run in its accustomed track. Men, who before the commission of crime have been noted for the mathematical accuracy of their reasoning, after its consummation become the poorest logicians. So with Sir Rashleigh. He was convinced that he was already suspected—that the avenger had caught the clue to the chain of evidence, and this missing body was now in the hands of those who would use it as proof against him.

The thought paralyzed him for a moment. A panic fight—an abandonment of all the fruits of his dark deed, seemed his only resource now. First, however, he must get rid of the implements he had brought with him. He hastily threw the spade and pickaxe into the trench, without reflecting how he should fill up the aperture without their help. The absurdity of this occurred to him, however, and he laughed—a wild laugh, that sounded strangely to his own ears after it had left his lips. Then he reflected that probably the tools were branded, and if ever found, might be used, in some way, as evidence. So he pulled them out of the grave again. The rope he left, however, and covered that and the coffin up as speedily as possible, working hard to give the mound its former shape. When this toil was over, he took his way back to the manor-house. But not alone—he was sure he had company—spectral company. At one time he fancied he felt a cold breath fan his cheek; at another, an icy hand laid upon his arm. How changed, from the haughty man who never, till within a few short hours, knew the sensation of fear!

How he found his way back to the manor-house was a marvel to himself. He was not destined, however, to perish by the wayside. A fall from the cliff, a grave in the wrathful sea, would have been too merciful an ending for a man like him. His earthly tortures would have been too brief.

Back again at the old manor-house! He replaced the tools in the spot from which he had taken them, stealthily entered the house, crept up-stairs, threw off his disguise, and flung himself upon his bed. Long hours had been consumed in his toil and travel, and already the eastern horizon was brightening as the fog moved away before the rising breeze. The faint twittering of the birds was heard among the leaves. Wearied and prostrated by emotion and fatigue, Sir Rashleigh closed his eyes, but only a brief slumber was vouchsafed to him. Before the sun had fairly risen, he was broad awake again—thinking—thinking of his crime and the prospective retribution. What would that day bring forth? Were the ministers of justice already weaving the net that would bind him in its iron meshes?

(To be continued.)

THE TRIAL OF COLONEL CRAWLEY.—The Crawley trial is fine fun for the witnesses. There is a Parsee canteen-keeper getting £70 a month, and dashing about town in fine style at the expense of the income-tax, and about 150 soldiers, two-thirds of whom know nothing about the affair, but merely tendered themselves as witnesses in order that they might get the trip home. The American crimps have been among them offering better pay than captains in the line if they will only cross the water and teach the Yankees how to ride.

A GHOST ON BOARD THE GREAT EASTERN.—Captain W. Paton, whilst addressing the members of the Mercantile Marine Association in reference to the plan for repairing the big ship, mentioned a singular occurrence which took place at New York. An impression got abroad that the ship was haunted, the alleged ghost being no other than the impersonation of an unfortunate riveter, who was heard plying his avocation in one of the wells or compartments. Captain Paton stated that before the vessel left this country he believed that one of the men employed in her construction was missing. The man was a riveter; he was missed from the ship, and never came for his wages, the supposition being that he had been riveted up in some part of the vessel. So firmly impressed were some of the men with this idea that they left the ship in consequence. They affirmed that they had heard their departed friend busily engaged riveting in the middle of the night. The story was believed by many persons in New York, and on one occasion, while the ship was under repair, a diver signalled to be drawn up. He appeared pale with fright, and declared the ghost of the riveter was busy in the bottom part of the ship; in fact, that he began riveting immediately over his head. Such was the consternation amongst the divers that they called in the aid of one of the

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spirit mediums, who are somewhat numerous in the city of New York. The medium came on board the ship, and after an examination declared that the missing man was there both "in body and in spirit." Fortunately he (Captain Paton) by pure accident, was enabled to dispel the illusion. Being in a boat near the bows of the ship, he discovered that a swivel connected with the moorings worked to and fro, the movement causing a chink or vibration which at times, more especially at night, was heard throughout the vessel. It was this sound which had conjured up, in connection with the supposed fate of the unfortunate riveter, the phantom whose mysterious doings spread such consternation on board the big ship.

WOMAN AND HER MASTER.

By J. F. SMITH, Esq.

Author of "The Jewell," "The Pretlate," "Minnigrey," &c.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

DR. BRIARD had been installed several weeks at Moretown Abbey as the medical attendant of the unhappy Alice, for whose reception a suite of apartments had been prepared, completely isolated from the rest of the mansion.

The unprincipled charlatan fancied himself a philosopher—he was merely an epicurean, whose philosophy extended no further than a profound indifference to the feelings of others, and an unscrupulous indulgence of his own. Personally he felt neither hatred nor sympathy for the sufferings of his victim: they were the source of his present opulence—the means of gratifying his selfish tastes—and she continued to suffer.

"Athalie plays a dangerous game," he muttered, after having perused and reperused her letter, as he sat in the luxuriously-furnished library of Moretown Abbey, over some of the choicest wine in the earl's cellar; "and I have no wish to share the risk. True, she promises fairly—liberally," he added—his resolution wavering between his desire of independence and the dread of detection; "but would she fulfil her promise? She must fulfil it!" he exclaimed, after a long silence; "once Countess of Moretown, she would be my slave—one word of mine would hurl her from the pinnacle of grandeur—strip the coronet from her brow, and reduce her to plain Athalie Briard. And, after all, ten thousand pounds is a handsome—very handsome sum. In France or Italy it would be independence—and really this wretched, foggy climate, this life of seclusion, undermine my health."

Not one thought of the victim—one regret for the crime he was tempted to commit—entered into the calculations of the speaker. He slowly arose from his seat, and, advancing towards a large table, placed in a recess, opened his medicine-chest and with great care began to compound a mixture from its contents. In the midst of his task he would occasionally pause and stand absorbed for several minutes, then resume his manipulation by the addition of some fresh drug.

Although his knowledge as a physician was extremely limited, Dr. Briard was a profound chemist—a pupil of that school which produced Tophana and the Marchioness de Brinvilliers—both of whom suffered death for their crimes.

So intent had Dr. Briard been on mixing his composing draught, that he had not noticed the opening of the door of the library, or the entrance of Quirk and his grandson. Great, therefore, was his astonishment and terror, when, turning suddenly round, he saw the lawyer coolly reading the letter from Mademoiselle Athalie, which he had unconsciously left upon the table.

"Pray sir," he demanded, "by what right do you intrude upon my privacy, or presume to read my correspondence?"

"As to my right," replied the old man, with imperious self-possession, "we will discuss that hereafter. Why I am here, this will inform you."

So saying, he handed the charlatan his credentials from the earl, and deliberately placed the letter he had been reading in his pocket.

The doctor, his countenance livid with rage, approached the speaker, determined by any means to obtain possession of the document which so terribly compromised him.

"Ring the bell, Sir Phineas," exclaimed his grandfather, hastily, "and summon the domestics."

The title of the party thus addressed and the resolute tone of the speaker awed the guilty wretch, and he sank back upon the nearest chair.

"You need not ring yet?" continued the lawyer; "but keep your eye upon him. This gentleman and I must have some converse, as soon as he is sufficiently recovered from his surprise. No doubt I shall find him reasonable."

The baronet, who highly enjoyed the scene—although he could not comprehend it—withdraw his

hand from the bell-rope, but remained standing near it.

"What is your purpose here?" demanded Briard, as soon as he had mastered his confusion.

His visitor once more referred him to the letter of his lordship.

"Still I do not comprehend by what right you take possession of my correspondence."

"Pshaw!" said the old man; "I gave you credit for being a man of the world. In the game of life every one does the best he can to strengthen his own hand. Accident has played into mine. You perceive," he added, "that I am here by the authority, and possessed of the entire confidence of the earl?"

"Yes," answered the husband of Athalie, with a sigh.

"Circumstances have turned out unfortunately for his lordship," continued Mr. Quirk. "The insanity of the countess has already cost him twelve thousand a-year; her death would deprive him of nearly as much more. Can you wonder that he is most anxious for her health? Such a property as the Riddle estate might make any man anxious."

Brief as the explanation was, Briard completely understood it. His dream of a luxurious life in Italy vanished in an instant.

"Of course," he said, "you are not for a moment to suppose that—"

"I suppose nothing," interrupted his visitor: "men of my profession judge from facts—not supposition."

"No one could feel more indignant at such an offer," added the doctor, "than I did."

"Doubtless!"

"It must have been written in a moment of madness."

"Or very great imprudence," observed Mr. Quirk: "and imprudence, in the game we speak of, is a species of madness! Be kind enough to ring the bell, Sir Phineas."

The guilty wretch started from his seat, and his countenance a second time assumed a threatening expression.

"You need not be uneasy," added the speaker; "the order I was about to give in no way relates to you."

The old footman, James, entered the library.

"Has the chaise left?" inquired the lawyer.

"Not yet, sir," was the reply; "the postboys are watering their horses, and—"

"Enough!" said the old man, hastily. "Tell them not to remove the luggage: Sir Phineas Briancourt and I will return to Fulton to night."

The man bowed, and retired to execute his orders.

"Surely you will pass a few days at least at the abbey?" said Dr. Briard, still doubtful of the intentions of his visitor towards him.

"Not an hour!" replied the lawyer, with a peculiar smile. "Pardon me, my dear sir, but I do not think that the air of Moretown conduces to health. Besides, I detest giving trouble! Therefore my grandson and I will take up our abode at the hotel, where we shall expect to see you in the morning to breakfast. You may breakfast with me," he added, "although I should decline the honour of even a glass of water with you!"

The half-mocking yet resolute tone in which this was uttered, convinced the confidential physician that he had to deal with one whom he could neither outwit nor frighten—with a man as far-seeing as himself.

"But the letter?" he said.

"We will converse about that and other matters in the morning!"

"You cannot intend to deprive me of it?"

"I shall expect you at ten," was the reply; "not a minute later!"

Dr. Briard darted between the speaker and the door: he was unarmed, but relied upon his strength.

"You do not pass," he said, "till it is restored to my possession!"

"Do you really mean it?"

"Really!" replied the ruffian, at the same time turning the key in the lock.

"Oblige me, Sir Phineas," said his grandfather, coolly, "with one of your pistols—I think you have them with you! I should be sorry—very sorry—to rid the world of such an ornament to his profession—the earl of so valuable a person—so mindful of his interests—so skilful and considerate—but, since the doctor will be obstinate, I have no other resource!"

The baronet drew the weapons from his pocket, and, cocking one of them, placed it in the hand of the old man, who appeared as cool and collected as if talking to one of his clients in his own office.

"Would you murder me?" exclaimed Briard, looking round the room for some means of defence.

"Not unnecessarily!" replied the old man; "besides the law, in its wisdom, draws a wide distinction between homicide in self-defence and murder!"

He advanced towards the half-subdued and terrified wretch, levelled the pistol within a few inches of his head, and demanded the key of the apartment.

"Take it!" exclaimed Briard, gnashing his teeth with

impotent rage, at the same time casting it upon the carpet.

"Oblige me, Sir Phineas," said his grandfather, in the same bland tone of voice which he had used throughout the interview, "by unlocking the door."

The young man—who, although he admired the sang-froid of his relative, was very far from imitating it—at once did as he was directed, and they both passed from the library.

"Remember, my dear sir," observed the lawyer, by way of adieu, "that I expect you to-morrow to breakfast. This little contretemps will not in the slightest degree diminish the cordiality of your reception! I never bear malice against a baffled enemy, whatever I may feel towards a successful one!"

In a few minutes the cracking of the postilions' whips was heard and the chaise containing Quirk and his grandson rolled over the gravel walk, past the windows of the library, where Dr. Briard, overwhelmed with surprise and consternation, stood, cursing his own imprudence in leaving the letter of Athalie upon the table.

Vainly he endeavoured to console himself with the idea that the old rascal—as he styled his visitor—merely detained the letter to extort money from him, and for no ulterior motive.

"Athalie must loosen her purse-strings!" he said.

"The lawyer knows the value of the hold he has obtained over her! Would I had been alone with him!" he added, with a fiend-like look.

If Quirk could have heard the words and seen the countenance of the speaker, he would have felt that it was quite as well a third party had been present at their interview.

When the nurse entered the room for the composing draught for Alice, the doctor informed her that he should not administer any medicine for that night—being resolved to try what nature, unassisted, would do for his patient. With a surprised and not very satisfied look, the woman returned to her unhappy charge.

CHAPTER XLIX.

You wrong him, sir, by deeming that his nature is capable of any touch of pity. The page Where angels write men's good and virtuous deeds Is still a blank to him. Old Play.

"Uprox my honour, granddad," exclaimed the baronet, as they rode towards the village of Fulton, "but you have surprised me. I never gave you credit for so much nerve."

"I had law on my side," answered the lawyer, with a chuckle, for he felt a sort of professional pride in having baffled the physician.

"Was it worth the risk?" inquired Sir Phineas.

"Worth the risk!" repeated Quirk. "Do you imagine that if it had not been worth it, I should have encountered it?"

"And what did the letter contain?"

A statesman's dream—ambitious aim—a seat in the legislature of the country! "replied the old man. "I carry the Earl of Moretown's close borough, electors and all, in my pocket; I am the owner of it, not he; and you shall be my nominee!"

"Still I cannot understand."

"Be content to reap the harvest," interrupted his wily relative, "without inquiring after the hand that sowed it. What a pity," he added, in the intoxication of his triumph, "that Lord Moretown has not a daughter as well as a seat in Parliament to bestow upon you!"

"Mad," thought the young man, who was perfectly well acquainted with the character of the earl: "he must be mad! I marry the daughter of a man who is hand and glove with the minister, visits only with the peerage, and who looks upon me as grandson of Quirk, the lawyer, rather than Sir Phineas Briancourt?"

As his lordship had not a daughter, he kept his ideas upon the subject to himself.

On alighting at the hotel, the first question which Quirk put to the landlord was, to inquire at what hour the mail from Edinburgh passed through the village on its way to London.

"In about an hour," was the reply.

"And what sort of a person is the guard? Is he trustworthy?"

"Trustworthy!" repeated the innkeeper. "Ah, sir, it is plain that you do not know Tom Blake, 'Honest Tom,' as he is called. Why he is trusted and respected by all the country round—has been thirty years on the road—shot two highwaymen in his time!"

Such a character, and from such a source, was quite sufficient to satisfy even the suspicious lawyer, who, on being shown into a private room, called for pens and paper, and began to write a few hasty lines to his bankers, directing them to receive a packet from the bearer, the guard of the Edinburgh mail, and to pay him ten pounds.

In a postscript he added, that the packet alluded to

was not to be given to any person but himself—not even to his confidential clerk.

"There," he said, after carefully sealing the parcel, which he had made of an old newspaper and the letter of the governess, "let the doctor call as soon as he likes; I am prepared."

An hour afterwards it was on its way to London; and the writer, satisfied with his day's work, sleeping with a quiet conscience—we do not say a good one—on the best bed in the Moretown Arms.

At the appointed hour the following morning, Dr. Briard made his appearance at the Hotel. Quirk received him with that ironical politeness which was more galling to the charlatan than the most studied insult would have been. As the lawyer had no longer anything to fear, either from his violence or his craftiness, he hinted to his grandson that he could dispense with his presence at their interview; and Sir Phineas accordingly set out for a ramble alone.

The baronet had not walked very far beyond the limits of the village, before he encountered two girls, whose remarkable beauty struck him with admiration and surprise. Young as he was, he had already acquired the habits and principles of a confirmed libertine; and the modest blush which his unmanly stare brought to the cheeks of the sisters only excited his desire to know more of them.

With that easy self-sufficiency, the characteristic of a vulgar mind, he even ventured to address them.

Poor Mary absolutely trembled; but the insulting coolness of the intruder only aroused the anger of Jane.

"Does it not strike you," she replied to some common-place observation about two ladies being alone, "that if we had thought protection necessary, or deemed it probable to encounter impertinence in a neighbourhood where we are known, that a servant would have attended us?"

So saying, she attempted to pass on her way with her sister; but the baronet retained his place in the centre of the narrow pathway.

"You are severe!" he said; "but I have seen too much of your sex to recoil at the first repulse!"

"Let us turn back," whispered Mary, greatly terrified.

Jane, however, decided otherwise, and wisely, for they were nearer the village than home.

"If you are a gentleman," she said, "you will permit us to pass. Further rudeness will only provoke the chastisement which already you have richly merited. Where," she added, in an under tone to her companion, "can Harry and Charles linger?"

"Harry and Charles!" repeated Sir Phineas, who had caught the names, in a sneering tone; "should not I answer the purpose as well as Harry and Charles? I am young, rich, and a gentleman!"

"If puppyhood is a sign of youth," answered Jane, spiritively, "you are, indeed very young! As to your being a gentleman, permit me to doubt it!"

"Perhaps a kiss might convince you, my pretty vixen!" exclaimed the baronet, deeply mortified by the retort.

Fortunately for the sisters, the speaker was not permitted to carry his insolence further: for Charles Harland and Harry Sinclair, who had returned from Cambridge for the vacation, made their appearance at the end of the walk.

It was easy to perceive, from the agitation of Mary and Jane, and the insolent air with which the intruder was advancing towards them, that something unpleasant had occurred. The lovers were by their side in an instant.

"Mary—dear Mary! what has occurred?" demanded Charles Harland, his eyes flashing with indignation.

"Sir Phineas!" exclaimed Harry Sinclair, in a tone of astonishment, for the baronet had been one of his intimate associates, much to the regret of his friend Charles, at the university.

"Have you been insulted?" demanded the latter, of the still terrified girl.

With the overbearing, tyrannical nature of his father, Sir Phineas inherited much of the prudence of old Lawyer Quirk whom he resembled both in person and in mind, far more than the race of Briancourt. He saw in an instant that he had placed himself in a false position, and although he dreaded little from the anger of Harry Sinclair, he did not feel so perfectly assured of safety from the resentment of his fiend, who had ever treated him with marked coldness, and repelled his advances.

He stammered a confused and humble apology, which he trusted the ladies would accept.

"Yes—yes!" said Mary; "we forgive you—pray go!"

The baronet raised his hat, and walked on. Jane observed, with a pang, that her lover gave him his hand at parting.

"Is it possible," she said, "that such a man as that, Harry, can be your friend?"

"Friend is not exactly the word," replied her lover,

colouring deeply; "the fact is, in the university we are compelled to know and associate with many whom we do not esteem, especially those of the same rank in life as ourselves."

At the word "rank," Charles Harland smiled bitterly. As the nephew and presumptive heir of his uncle, Sir Cuthbert Sinclair, the speaker had been gradually drawn into a set where exclusiveness supplied the place of merit, and folly and dissipation contended for precedence. This had caused a general estrangement between them; if their friendship was not destroyed, it was weakened.

Jane observed with regret the different manner in which the young men had resented the conduct of the titled ruffian. To her ardent, affectionate nature, it appeared like a slight.

During the walk towards the holm she remained silent and unhappy.

When Sir Phineas returned to the hotel he found that a mutual, if not satisfactory understanding had taken place between Dr. Briard and his grandfather. The conditions—for there doubtless had been conditions—he doubted not had been to the advantage of the latter.

"Farewell!" said the lawyer, shaking his visitor by the hand; "I need not impress upon your mind the necessity of every attention being paid to the health as well as the safe keeping of the countess."

"Rest satisfied," replied the charlatan, as he took his leave; "now that I know the value of her life I shall be doubly anxious."

"So you have tamed the tiger?" observed the baronet with a smile, as soon as he and Quirk were alone.

The old man shrugged his shoulders complacently.

"And by what means?"

"By pointing out to him that which governs the world," replied his relative; "his interest. I gave him a lesson, in fact—proved it to him that I could be a dangerous enemy—upon which he made me his friend."

"His friend!" repeated his grandson.

"Yes, as long as it answers my interest to remain so; few friendships in this world endure longer."

The waiter entered the breakfast-room to clear the table, and the speaker advanced towards the window, which looked into the narrow street of the village, whilst Sir Phineas amused himself with the newspaper.

A sudden exclamation of mingled joy and surprise escaped from the lips of the old man.

His grandson looked up inquiringly.

"Quick, waiter—here!" cried Quirk, at the same time stealthily drawing back, so as not to be observed from the street.

The man was by his side in an instant.

"Do you see that person—he, that old man with grey hair—who is speaking with another at the door of the shop opposite?"

"See him!" yes, sir.

"And do you know his name?"

"Of course I do, sir," replied the waiter; "everybody in the village knows Cabel Brown."

"Cabel Brown!" repeated the lawyer with a loud chuckle; "ha—humph! He is uncommonly like an old acquaintance of mine—but of course I am mistaken. Does he live in the neighbourhood?"

"With Mrs. Graham, at the holm, sir."

"With Mrs. Graham at the holm. And pray who is Mrs. Graham?"

"That is more than any person in Fulton can tell you, sir," answered the man; "unless it is the rector, Dr. Harland, whose son, they say, is to marry one of her grand-daughters, and Mr. Sinclair the other."

The baronet dropped his newspaper—for he began to feel interested.

Quirk reflected for a few moments.

"One of her grand-daughters! Mrs. Graham has two, then?"

"Yes, sir!" said the waiter, who did not half like the tone in which he was being questioned; "and two beautiful and excellent young ladies they are! There is not a poor creature in the village, but has cause to bless them!"

The old man paid little attention to the commendation, but pursued his inquiries.

"And you say no one here knows Mrs. Graham?"

"I believe not, sir. And yet she is very rich."

"I can believe that!" ejaculated the lawyer, bitterly.

"How long has she resided at the ——— How did you name the place?"

"The holm, sir; twelve or thirteen years—perhaps more or less, I cannot exactly say—for I was a boy when they came!"

"The very time!" thought Quirk.

"What time did you please to order post-horses, sir?" added the waiter.

"I have altered my mind!" said the lawyer sharply; "and shall remain at the hotel at least another day!"

The man left the room, to convey the intelligence to his master.

CHAPTER I.

He works in secret, like the mole, and hath
The scent of the bloodhound, the fox's craft,
The tiger's cruelty—intelligence is all
That he hath human in him. *Old Play.*

It happened to be market-day at Fulton, and many of the farmers and stewards of the neighbouring gentry attended the ordinary at the Moretown Arms. Quirk, instead of dining in his own room, much to the dissatisfaction of his grandson, took his repast at the public table. But then he had his reasons—and the reasons of the lawyer were generally very cogent ones.

"It is my wish," observed the old man to the baronet, as he descended to the public-room, "that for a few hours you should drop your title!"

The young man looked at him with surprise.

"And be careful," he continued, "not to address me by my name! I do not wish to be known!"

"I really cannot understand—"

"It is not necessary that you should understand!" interrupted his relative; "at least, for the present. All in good time—accident has played into my hands, when I least expected it! If you observe any one listening to my conversation at table, talk to him—do anything to distract his attention!"

"Is it possible," exclaimed the baronet, his countenance brightening at the supposition, "that you have obtained any clue to—"

"Hush!" said his grandfather, with a smile; "the name must not be uttered yet!"

At the ordinary, the addition of the strangers excited little observation—the habitual frequenters being too much occupied either with their personal or local affairs. The prices of corn, politics, harvest prospects, and similar matters were discussed, without Mr. Quirk seeing the opening he anxiously waited for. At last the holm was mentioned.

"Who are we to have next as a tenant, Mr. Bernard?" inquired a respectable farmer, of a staid, elderly man, who was seated next to the lawyer.

"Can't tell!" was the reply.

"When does Mrs. Graham leave?" inquired another.

"Don't know!"

Then the conversation took another turn, and the subject dropped.

"From what the gentleman just said," observed Mr. Quirk, addressing his neighbour in his blandest tone, "I am to suppose that the holm will soon be to let?"

"Not yet this six months!" was the reply.

"Then Mrs. Graham does not leave directly?"

"In a few weeks," answered Mr. Bernard—who had the letting of the place, and fancied that the stranger might have some idea of taking it; "but the lady prefers paying the rent for six months, rather than suffer the annoyance of any one who might wish to take it going over the place whilst she inhabits it. Such, at least," he added, "was the reason which her house-steward, Caleb Brown, assigned—for I have never seen Mrs. Graham myself!"

The lawyer smiled; he fancied that he perfectly understood the lady's reasons.

"But I dare say," continued the speaker, "that if you had any idea of the place, the objection might be got over."

"Not for myself," replied the old man; "but it might possibly suit a friend of mine!"

Then followed an inquiry as to the rent, extent of ground, and the accommodation which the house afforded for a family: all of which were perfectly unimportant to the lawyer, and only entered into by him to confirm Mr. Bernard in the supposition that he really had some thought of taking the holm.

"Is it to be sold?" he inquired, in a tone of interest.

"We have no power to sell," replied the agent, "or it might have been parted with long since! Indeed, it was only the other day that Mr. Cantor, Lord Moretown's tenant at Borderclough, put the same question to me!"

"Who?" demanded the lawyer, unable to suppress his astonishment not only at the name, but at the possibility of Ned Cantor becoming the purchaser of anything.

"Mr. Cantor!"

"Ned Cantor?"

"I believe that is his name!" said Mr. Bernard; "a very respectable man, and a great favourite of his lordship's! Do you know him?"

"I have heard of him!"

"He has been a great traveller!"

Mr. Quirk also avowed his acquaintance with that very interesting fact; his only surprise was, that he had ever returned from his travels.

When our readers recollect the large sum which Mabel had inherited from her uncle, and had imprudently given to her husband, they will perfectly comprehend his offer of buying the holm. To his old acquaintance, the lawyer, the intelligence was deeply

interesting; it was another mystery to fathom, in addition to the one of which he had already obtained a clue.

Before quitting the table, he ascertained that Mrs. Graham intended to remove in a few weeks to a house she had taken near London, as his informant supposed, on account of the approaching marriage of the young ladies.

During his journey to town—for Quirk, having ascertained all that he wished to know, started, as he had arranged, on the following morning—the old man silently meditated on his plans.

"She must be mad," he thought, alluding to Mrs. Graham, "to venture near London! Perhaps she thinks I have forgotten her, am dead! Hate never dies, and interest seldom forgets! Better there than here!" he added; "she will be under my own eye!"

Various also were his speculations on the reasons of Lord Moretown for employing Ned Cantor in his service. It was evident that the peer had still secrets even from him, and he determined to ferret them out.

"Don't you feel internally tired?" said the baronet, yawning, as they changed horses at York.

"Tired!" repeated his grandfather. "My dear boy, the last three days have taken ten years from my shoulders—I feel quite young again!"

After all, the renewed energy which the old man experienced was something like the vigour of the snake, warmed by a sunbeam in winter.

Quirk's first visit on his arrival in London was to his client, the Earl of Moretown, whom he found at the house of Mademoiselle Athalie. The governess, coloured slightly as he entered the room. The quick eye of the lawyer detected her confusion, and he mentally concluded that she had received a letter from Brian.

"Well!" said the peer; "you have seen the doctor?"

"I have, my lord: a clever man—a very clever man! I have fully impressed him with the importance of attending to your wishes touching the health of the countess!"

At the marked emphasis upon the words "your wishes," the artful Frenchwoman was compelled to turn aside: she could not endure the searching glance of the speaker.

"You will still keep an eye upon the movements of the goldsmith?" observed his lordship.

"Certainly!"

"It is of the utmost importance to discover the retreat of my son!"

Quirk was perfectly aware of the importance of it, and promised that neither expense nor effort should be spared; although, as he was a lawyer, the former promise was perfectly unnecessary.

"I doubt not that in a few weeks," he said, "when immunity has lulled them into security, and thrown them off their guard, we shall obtain some clue to the lost child! No matter how fine!" he added, with a chuckle; "I pledge my reputation to follow it out successfully!"

"And when you succeed!" exclaimed Mademoiselle Athalie, who passionately desired to have the innocent boy once more in her power, "claim your reward of me!"

The lawyer bowed. It was, however, very far from his intention, in the event of the discovery, to intrust the infant either into her hands or his father's: he was tired of telling for others. The Eiddle estate was large, and his restless genius had already traced the outline of a scheme which would, if successful, transfer half of it to himself.

In one respect, at least, Quirk had acted conscientiously: he had attended to the affairs of his client before his own.

On reaching Serjeants' Inn, he sent for his confidential clerk, Mr. Snape—a little, withered old man, who had been upwards of thirty years in his employ. The lawyer paid him well, and Mr. Snape's conscience never troubled him as to the nature of the duties required of him—but performed them with a sort of mechanical indifference and punctuality.

The first thing which the clerk did was to hand his employer a list of the disbursements he had made during his absence. Quirk ran the items carelessly over, till he came to the name of Churchill.

"Has that spendthrift been here again?" he demanded, in an angry tone.

The clerk nodded; he was a man of few words.

"And you gave him half a sovereign?"

The nod was repeated.

"You were wrong—very wrong!" continued his master, getting flushed in the face. "I have lost quite enough by him already!"

Mr. Snape knew exactly how much his employer had made or lost by him; for he made notes of such things.

"Your new client," he said, without being in the slightest degree moved by the lawyer's anger, "Lord

Annersley, was in the office when the fellow called! He had been drinking, and when in that state is very abusive!"

Mr. Quirk's anger began to cool.

"Besides," continued the speaker, "the doctors recommend him *laudnum*, and he says he can't live without it; so I thought it only an act of charity to let him have it."

"*Laudnum!*" repeated his master, in a tone which showed that he was quite appeased; "perhaps you were right, after all, Snape. We must do something for our fellow-creatures. Let it pass."

The clerk silently chuckled: he was amused at the idea of his master attempting to deceive him.

"Snape," continued the lawyer, "I am about to employ you in an affair which will take you for some weeks from London. You must proceed to Fulton, where, at a mansion called the holm, a Mrs. Graham resides."

"Good," said the clerk taking out a memorandum-book, and noting down the name.

"She is about to leave the place. Follow her wherever she goes. London, I believe, is to be her destination. If you can contrive to get into the family, so much the better; but on no account lose sight of her. Write to me daily."

"Should she attempt to leave England," said the clerk, "What am I to do then?"

"Arrest her!"

"For debt?"

Quirk whispered a few words in the ear of Mr. Snape, who, usually imperturbable, expressed much surprise.

"It shall be done," he said; "but I fear my absence will materially inconvenience you. First, there are the Annersley settlements."

"I will see to them," observed his employer.

"And the affair of the advowson?"

"Shall be attended to. The business at present in hand is of more importance than all these—I have a personal interest in it."

The clerk knew that it would be useless, after such an avowal, to make any further objections, for the personal interests of Mr. Quirk superseded every other. Retiring to the general office, he occupied himself in giving directions to his subordinates, and that same night set out on his journey to Fulton.

"An invaluable man," muttered the lawyer, "in an office such as mine. Discreet and faithful—asks no unnecessary questions."

There was one little habit of Mr. Snape which might possibly have altered his employer's opinion of him. For many years he had been intrusted with the keys of both the offices, where he frequently remained for hours after the junior clerks had left.

How he occupied himself at such times no one knew, unless it was a brother-in-law, who sometimes called upon him at the chambers. The man was an exceedingly clever locksmith.

"Another journey," muttered the respectable Mr. Snape, as he plodded his way towards Islington, to take an affectionate leave of his better-half and all the little Snapes. "I am something like the cat in the fable: I draw the chestnuts out of the fire when they are roasted, and Quirk is the greedy ape who devours them! Well—well," he added, with a significant smile, "the time may come when I shall have my share of them, too. Quibble and Scamp's managing clerk gets four hundred a-year, while I have only three. Three," he repeated, bitterly; "no matter—a partnership will strike the balance."

It had long been the dream of his life to see upon the brass-plate on the door of the chambers in Serjeants' Inn the names of Quirk and Snape; and, to do him justice, he was in a fair way to accomplish it.

(To be continued.)

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

NAILS IN FRUIT TREES.—A gentleman stated to us that while on a visit to a neighbour, his attention was called to a large peach orchard, every tree of which was totally destroyed by the ravages of the worm, with the exception of three, and these were the most thrifty and flourishing peach-trees that he ever saw. The only cause of their superiority known to his host was an experiment made in consequence of observing that those parts of worm-eaten timber into which nails had been driven, were generally sound. When his trees were about a year old, he drove a tennypenny nail through the body as near the ground as possible. While the balance of his orchard had failed, and finally yielded to the ravages of the worms, three of these trees selected at random, treated precisely in the same manner, with the exception of nailing, had always been healthy, furnishing him at the very same period with the greatest profusion of the most luscious fruit. It is supposed the salt of iron afforded by the nails is offensive to the worms, while it is harmless, perhaps even beneficial, to the tree. A chemical writer on the sub-

ject, says: "The oxydation or the rusting of the iron by the sap evolves ammonia, which, as the sap rises, will of course impregnate every particle of foliage, and prove too severe a dose for the delicate palate of intruding insects." The writer recommends driving half-a-dozen nails into the trunk. Several experiments of the kind resulted successfully.

STATISTICS.

WRECKS.—During the past week 69 wrecks have been reported, which make a total of 2,194 for the present year.

TRADE WITH FRANCE.—It appears from a Parliamentary document just published, that in nine months ended Sept. 30, the imports from France into the United Kingdom amounted to £16,928,623, against £14,925,458 in the preceding year; whilst the exports of British manufactures was in one period £6,574,483, and £7,004,722 in the other.

The mineral statistics of Great Britain for 1862 have been recently published by Mr. Robert Hunt, of the School of Mines. The quantity of gold extracted was 5,209 oz.; silver, 686,123 oz.; tin, 8,476 tons; copper, 14,843 tons; lead, 69,081 tons; zinc, 2,151 tons; coal, 81,638,338 tons; representing a total value of £34,691,037. The quantity of coal sent to the metropolis during the past year was 5,000,000 tons, of which 3,500,000 tons were sea-borne.

CONSUMPTION OF SPIRITS AND WINE.—Returns prepared at the Inland Revenue-office and the Custom-house show that in the financial year ending with March, 1860, with a duty of 8s., 24,435,443 gallons of home-made spirits were retained for consumption in the United Kingdom; in the financial year ending in March, 1863, with the duty raised to 10s., the quantity had fallen to 18,884,429 gallons, but the advance in the rate of duty made the revenue produced not very much less than in the year 1859-60. Of colonial spirits 3,758,383 gallons were entered for home consumption here in the year 1859-60, the duty being 8s. 2d.; but in the year 1862-3, with the duty raised to 10s. 2d., the consumption had fallen to 3,325,197 gallons. Of foreign spirits the quantity was 1,492,658 gallons in 1859-60, with a duty of 15s., but rose to 1,833,197 gallons in 1862-3, the duty being reduced to 10s. 6d. Of foreign and colonial wines the quantity was 7,272,308 gallons, in the former year, and in the latter, with a reduced duty, 9,876,908. The duty on the year 1859-60 produced a net revenue of £12,302,614; and on the wine £1,634,287, in the year 1862-3 the duty on the 24,042,823 gallons of spirits produced £12,103,239 and on the wine £1,137,305.

AMATEUR PEDESTRIANISM.—Recently, Mr. George Thompson, a gentleman amateur of Belfast, performed the feat of walking eighteen English miles within three hours.

It is said that Mr. Edwin James, who is about to be married to a lady with a fortune of £200,000, has sent for his London solicitor to New York, with the view of making arrangements for the satisfaction of such debts to English creditors as Mr. James feels bound, and that it is his duty, to discharge.

THE MAHOGANY TRADE.—Mahogany is down in England as well as in the United States, so that it will not pay to cut it. Our cuttings in Canada for the next year will not be more than one-third of the usual quantity, and the same may be said in regard to logwood; so the chances for trade for the year 1864 in this colony are very slight.

EDMUND KEAN IN SUSSEX.—Near Fairlight Mill is a small road-side inn called the "Hare and Hounds," and adjoining—in fact, forming part of the premises—stood, in 1857, a shed or barn used by Sussex roysterers as a skittle-alley. On the boards at the end of the building, and in various other parts of it, were still, at the above-mentioned date, faint but unmistakable traces of scene painting. The barn had originally fulfilled a higher mission than sheltering ardent followers of the popular skittles, and the fading frescoes with which it was adorned were executed by no less celebrated an artist than Sidney Cooper. Some years ago, he was scene-painter to a strolling company, which included a well-known actor and manager of the present day, who, at that time, young and unrecognized, fought the hard battle of life with his brethren in this little impromptu Fairlight Theatre. Edmund Kean, then in the full zenith of his fame, under Elliston at Drury Lane, coming to Hastings on leave of absence, found out the strollers, and, with his impulsive generosity, often played the part to them which the ravens did to the prophet. During the great tragedian's stay at Hastings, the business at Drury Lane "dropped" to such an alarming extent, that Elliston posted down to Kean, and implored him to return without delay. He consented, on condition that Elliston should stop one night and help to fill the

players' pockets. The town-crier was commissioned to announce Mr. Kean as Shylock, and Mr. Bliston as Young Wilding, in "The Liar." The prices were doubled, the barn crammed, the poor stroller's fortunes "brought up with a wet sail," and Kean went tranquilly back to London with his manager.—*The Orchestra.*

FACETIE.

TOUCHING THE RUSSELL RESIGNATION.—We knew it was all nonsense. A Whig is like the old French Guard—he dies, but never surrenders.—*Punch.*

A REFLECTION.—A man with a looking glass under his arm met a boy, and thought to be witty at his expense. "Here, boy!" said he, "just come and look in this glass, and you'll see a monkey." "Ah, indeed!" said the boy, "how did you discover it?" No answer given.

TRY IT!—When a Welsh cause was being tried in one of the London courts on Thursday, the counsel for the plaintiff begged to be excused, though a Welshman, from pronouncing the name of the place where the coal mine in question is situated. It was spelt "Llwywywywer."

THE SPIDER AND THE FLIES.

"Will you come and talk in Paris?" said the spider to the flies.

"Of the little points at issue that may happen to arise; Pray come in simple confidence, and lay aside all fears, To discuss in perfect amity, political ideas." Said the flies, "We thank you kindly, you are really so polite,

That we fear you see some greenness in the organs of our sight;

If you'll let us scan the programme, nigher still, and yet more nigh,

Praps we'll come (with sister Mary) when the bloom is on the eye."—*Fun.*

UNNECESSARY ADVICE.—A country gentleman, who fills every situation necessary to constitute him "the head of the village," and who had taken some pains to instruct the rustic inhabitants in the proper signs of respect due to him, being lately on a horse somewhat given to shy, and observing a lad walking before him, called out, "Boy, don't take off your hat!" The youth, turning his head, very innocently answered, "I won't a goin', sir."

FERTILE QUESTIONS.

Why should turtles be pitied?—Because theirs is a hard case.

Why is wine spoilt by being converted into negus?—Because you make a mull of it.

Every bird pleases us with its lay—especially the hen.

A GOOD THOUGHT!—A son of the Emerald Isle, once riding to market with a sack of potatoes before him, discovered that the horse was getting tired, whereupon he dismounted, put the potatoes upon his shoulders, and again mounted, saying, "It was better that he should carry the praties, he was fresher than the poor beast."

CUMPTON'S MISFORTUNE.—Cumpton keeps a ten-pin alley, and one day he was seen leaning up against the outside of it, weeping as if his heart would break. "What's the matter?" inquired one of his friends, who was passing. "Matter enough," he said. "I'm clean done over; my boy Charley's dead. I'm mighty misfortunate in babies. Just as soon as they gets big enough to set up the pins, they dies!" And poor Cumpton sobbed on.

AFTER DINNER.—Several efforts have been made to introduce the foreign custom of the gentlemen leaving the room with the ladies, but happily without success, as there can be no doubt that both meet again with renewed pleasure after a few minutes' separation. The late Lord A., dining with Lord and Lady S. (who were about the first to make the innovation), happened to be tormented by a tight boot, and, being ignorant of the intended measure, he contrived, by the aid of his other foot, and a friendly leg of the table, to draw it off. "I shall have an opportunity," thought he, "of re-booting after the ladies retire;" and his face beamed as he congratulated himself on his release, and on the impossibility of detection. Poor man, he was noted for getting into absurd situations! The gloves are adjusted, the signal is given, (that signal which is perhaps the only one never yet met but with acquiescence), and my lord rises in his place with serene brow, but, oh, horror! he presently beholds the being, late his lovely charge, looking at him in a very ominous manner! A glance round the room, and the whole terrible truth flashes upon him like a thunderbolt. There is no help for it—go he must. The drawing-room is reached, unconscious beauty seats herself on an ottoman in the most conspicuous part of the room, and talks on and on without giving any signs of coming to a full stop. The

wretched little peer stands fidgeting before her, and planning a speedy exit; when, just as he believes himself on the verge of accomplishing it, and is flattering himself that his black stocking has saved him from discovery, the door is flung wide open, and in comes John Thomas, bearing "my lord's boot" upon a silver charger!—"Life in a Country House."

A WORSTED TRADESMAN.

A man, some six feet three inches in height, and of herculean build, went into the place of one of the Worcester shopkeepers, and asked if they had got any "whirlers"—that is, stockings without feet.

"No," said the shopkeeper; but we have got some famous big strong stockings, as will just suit such a man as you."

"Let's have a look at them," said the man.

The counter was immediately covered with a quantity. The working Hercules selected the largest pair, and said:

"What's the price of them?"

"Four shillings and ninepence," was the rejoinder.

"Can you cut the feet off them?" was the next query.

"Oh, certainly," said the shopkeeper.

"Then just cut them off," was the laconic direction.

No sooner said than done. The long shop-shears were applied, and instantly the stockings were footless.

"And what's the price of 'em now?" asked the

"customer," with all the composure imaginable.

"Price of them now?" echoed the "worsted" merchant, surprised beyond measure at the absurdity of the question; "why, four shillings and ninepence to be sure!"

"Four shillings and ninepence!" exclaimed the purchaser; "I never gave but one shilling and sixpence for a pair of 'whirlers' in my life."

And he laid down the amount upon the counter.

"Well," replied the tradesman, chop-fallen and fairly outwitted, and throwing the mutilations at him, "take them, and be off with you! You've 'whirled' me this time, but I'll take good care that neither you nor any of your rogish gang shall do it again, as long as I live."

A BOAST WORTHY OF JOHN BULL.—A new pavement has been laid down in Trafalgar Square by a French company. It is not the first time by many that Nelson has seen French flags lying at his feet! (Hullo, boys, hallo!)—*Punch.*

STRICT IMPARTIALITY.—So strictly are the laws against smoking carried out at Windsor Castle, that the chimneys have received intimation from the Lord Chamberlain that they will be expected for the future to consume their own smoke. It will thus be seen that not the least partiality is shown, high or low.—*Punch.*

THE DISADVANTAGES OF BEING AGREEABLE.

I was once what is called an agreeable man, and the consequences of enjoying such a reputation were as follows:—

I was asked to be godfather forty-eight times, and my name is recorded on as many silver mugs, value each—£4 10s. 6d.

I gave away fifty-six brides and as many dressing-cases.

I said "Yes," when I ought to have said "No," six thousand five hundred and forty times.

I paid, in the course of fourteen years, £375 2s. 6d. for cab-fares in excess of what I ought to have done.

I lent 264 umbrellas and never received them back again.

I gave up my stall at the Opera, when I wanted to use it myself, on an average twenty-six times during the season.

I have had three hundred and odd colds and retain a permanent rheumatism from consenting to sit in draughts to oblige other people.

I have accepted two hundred and four accommodation-bills for friends in Government offices, and I am now going to Basinghall Street to declare myself an insolvent preparatory to my departure for Australia.—*Punch's Pocket Book, 1864.*

SERVANTS OR SLAVES?—The "Society for the Protection of Young Females" summoned a certain Mrs. Sarah Hughes at Bow Street, last week, for ill-treating a servant. Mr. Corrie, for reasons not easily appreciable, only fined the woman a pound. It came out in the evidence, during the case, that the servant was a mere child, between thirteen and fourteen years of age—that her wages were ninepence a week—and that she was the only servant the defendant employed, although she keeps the upper part of two houses in Holborn (by which is meant, probably, all the houses except the shop portion) and lets lodgings. The poor little wretch was put to sleep on a mere bag of straw, and was beaten for cutting herself a slice of dry bread for breakfast on a Sunday morning, when her mistress was late in coming down-stairs. The Emancipation

Society are very busy just now trying to prove that the abolition of black slavery is the real cause of the Federalists' attempt to enslave their white brothers in the South. Suppose the Society, instead of attempting to prove what does not exist, were to turn its hand—just to keep it in—to the bettering of the condition of those white slaves, with black faces, the grimy, underfed, overworked, hopeless little London lodging-house servant girls.—*Fun.*

A SMELL OF SPIRITS.

Sandy McLauchlin, the bethral (beadle), at Dunfermline, was a little man, with sharp brown eyes and a mouth expressive of fun. One day the minister, Mr. Johnstone, was on his way down from the manse to the High Street, after breakfast, as was his wont, to get his letters at the post-office, and see the only newspaper which then came to enlighten the inhabitants with news of public and foreign affairs. Observing Sandy slinking along the opposite side of the Cross as if to avoid a meeting, Mr. Johnstone called out, in his fine, sonorous voice—

"Saunders, I wish to speak to you."

With some reluctance, Sandy came forward, lifting his bonnet and pulling his forelock. After giving Sandy certain directions about kirk matters, the minister sniffed once or twice and remarked—

"Saunders, I fear you have been tasting (taking a glass) this morning."

"Deed sir," replied Sandy, with the coolest effrontery, set off with a droll glance of his brown eyes—

"Deed sir, I was just a-goin' to observe I thoct there was a smell of speerits among us this morning!"

THE YANKEE LADIES' MAN.—Though last not least upon the list of toasts drunk at the banquet at St. James's Hall on the American National Thanksgiving Day, was the following: "The Ladies—our sweethearts, wives, mothers, daughters, sisters, friends; their holy influence will break all chains but those which bind our hearts to them." The Ladies! And with that toast the gentlemen who drank it with demonstrative enthusiasm, doubtless coupled the name of General Butler.—*Punch.*

A SHARP QUESTION.—Tom is a bright little boy, and very much attached to his mother. The other day his father came home in a bad humour, and was scolding and finding fault with things generally. Little Tom sat and listened until he thought it necessary to interfere in behalf of his mother, when, looking up at his father, he said, in a very decided tone: "If you did not like her ways, what did you marry her for?" I need scarcely add that the weather cleared up at once, and that storm was over.

AN ANNUITY.

I had been about five years in Lombard Street, and had just admitted Mr. Pryce, my first partner in the firm of Lovegold and Company, when the greatest commercial calamity of my life befell me warning me never again to meddle with matters I did not understand.

A customer of ours, one Mr. Reeves, introduced a maiden lady, Miss Hannah Leigh, aged fifty, as her baptismal certificate testified. This amiable woman was in possession of the sum of five thousand pounds, which she was desirous of sinking for a life annuity. Now, I never before or since saw a female attenuated face and frame more plainly betokening an early departure from this world. Her cough was positively distressing to hear; her legs were swollen with dropsy, —so, at least, the two medical gentlemen we consulted declared; she had an affection of the liver, and had totally lost her appetite. One of the M.D.'s was of opinion that she could not possibly live six months—the other gave her nine at the utmost.

It seemed a promising, a very promising speculation, even upon the terms from which Hannah Leigh, confound her!—could not be persuaded to recede; namely, that for her five thousand pounds we should guarantee her one thousand per annum during life. In an evil hour we sealed to that bargain, and, horrible to say, Hannah Leigh is now, in 1863, alive, and apparently many years younger than she was in 1820! She came to our office in a Bath chair, was helped up stairs, and now—I met her last week—she walks with a firmer step than I do; her cough, and the dropsy, and the liver complaint, which, not long after the annuity was signed, showed symptoms of gradual amendment, have totally disappeared for at least forty years! Forty-three thousand pounds has Hannah Leigh already drawn from Lovegold and Company, and it's my opinion will plunder that persecuted firm of at least twenty thousand more.

The Registrar-General, depend upon it, who shall have to record her death—if she ever does die, with respect to which I have at times strange doubts—will say that Hannah Leigh was one of the most remarkable instances of longevity upon record.

We once, when the thing had become unbearable, tried if a Court of Equity could not afford us some re-

and got laughed at for our pains. One of the most solid sources of satisfaction offered by my retirement from business was, that I should no longer see Hannah Leigh, precisely upon the stroke of twelve on every quarter-day, call for that eternal two hundred and fifty pounds cheque.—*Secrets of My Office. By a Bill Broker.*

"OH, FIE!"

A fashionable contemporary, in speaking of the Empress of the French, appears to us to go a little too far. We know what those persons are called who show no respect for locks; what shall we say about the writer of this:

"Her Majesty, who has been for some time inconvenienced by the widening of the parting of her hair, resolved on her return from Spain to have recourse to the only remedy hitherto discovered, and has submitted to having it removed entirely down the line which was beginning to weaken."

It is really too bad to permit such bold language to appear. Even supposing her Majesty finds, as the song says, her

"Parting in such sweet sorrow," surely it is not quite fair to the fair lady to reveal her grief in "that (h)air manner." Her Majesty's *proux cheveux* ought not to let this pass unnoticed, so we may expect a brush about this breach of comity.—*Fun.*

SO UNLIKE HIM!—The Lord Chancellor lately made use of a remark, which, did we not know how foreign anything like sarcasm is to his nature, might be looked upon as such. On being asked whether he thought the arguments adduced by a certain legal luminary at a recent trial were sound, his lordship blandly replied, "Oh! yes. *All sound!*"—*Fun.*

GUINNESS AND GUINEAS.—The wealthy brewer of Dublin has expended £110,000 in restoring St. Patrick's Cathedral in that city. This is indeed being a stout supporter of the Church. We should like to know what the temperance people will say to this. They never come out so handsomely. Whatever money they make they keep to themselves, and don't even down with the dust as generously as a more water-cart. They may not approve, perhaps, of the particular measures (not the power ones) of this open-handed Sir John Barleycorn; but there are plenty of ways in which they could emulate his munificence. They might see to the efficient water-supply of Bethnal-green and such places, or the increase of the drinking fountains. But they won't! There's not a pump in all their society that does not prefer spouting in Exeter Hall, to giving a cup of cold water where it is needed.—*Fun.*

A LEARNED ECHO.—In the course of last summer, some strangers of distinction were induced to visit Rothiemurchus, from the report they heard of an "echo" remarkable for the clear and distinct nature of its reverberations. On reaching the spot whence the trial of its power is usually made, their guide put his hands to the sides of his mouth, and bawled out with the lungs of a Stentor a salutation in Gaelic, which was repeated with a precision that seemed beyond the expectations of the party. One of the gentlemen, by way of trying the strength of his voice, put his hands to the sides of his mouth in the same manner as the guide, and called out, "How far are we from home?" These words, much to the astonishment of their conductor, were also repeated. Then poor Donald, with a simplicity which brought a smile over the party, said—"You may think it strange, gentlemen, but this is the first time I have heard the echo speak English. She must be well instructed."

A HINT TO THE HOSPITABLE.—Being accustomed to receive numerous invitations to dine, which are the only invitations I ever accept, allow me to suggest, for the instruction of persons who practise hospitality, and the convenience of those whom they wish to enjoy it, that, whenever they ask anybody to dinner, they should enclose him a bill of fare. Esteeming and regarding my friends everyone alike, and taking an equal pleasure in the society of all those who are good to me, I should by that means be enabled readily to decide what I now often find a question of distressing difficulty, namely, out of a number of houses where my company is requested on the same day, which to go to. One can't write to all one's friends who ask, one to dinner, and say, "What are you going to have?" because that would look as if one's regard for them were the sort of attachment vulgarly called "cupboard love." But if they had any delicacy they would spare one the necessity of making that inquiry, by letting one know what delicacies they proposed to give him.—*Punch.*

THE RAPPAHANNOCK.—A large screw-steamer, called the Rappahannock, has arrived in Calais. She carries the flag of the Southern States of America (white, with a red corner, and with a blue St. Andrew's cross and the thirteen stars), and a pennant of

the same colours. This steamer was in the roadstead from midnight, waiting to receive on board fifteen young Americans, who had been residing there for more than two months, and who are to serve as her officers. These officers had embarked on board a fishing boat which they had hired to convey them to Boulogne, as they told the master of her, in order to conceal their project and avoid the police. When once they were outside the port, however, they ordered him to put them on board a vessel from which rockets were being fired, which was the signal agreed upon. The master of the boat in alarm called for assistance from some other boats near him, and with their help he returned into port, where he landed his passengers, who were much annoyed at what had occurred. The Rappahannock, which has been purchased for the Confederate Government, was an English vessel undergoing repair at Sheerness. She left that port under pretence of trying her machinery, and taking with her as crew the mechanics and ship carpenters who were at work on board. Once at sea, the English flag was replaced by that of the Southern States. She has not yet any guns on board, but is pierced for eight heavy guns. Her repairs are, it is thought, about to be completed at Calais.

IVY LEAVES.

WELCOME are the buds of spring,

Sweet the summer flowers,

Stately are the old elm-trees,

Round our garden bowers;

Blessed is the golden corn

In the piled-up sheaves;

Yet let us have a welcome, too,

For glossy ivy leaves;

Beautiful the holly red,

In church, in hall, in cot,

Gather'd by both rich and poor—

But churls can love it not;

Twined with pearly mistletoe,

The wreath Old Christmas weaves,

Yet let us have a welcome still,

For glossy ivy leaves!

Verdant, while other leaves are whirling

On the autumn blast;

Peeping forth still green and glossy,

Though the snow falls fast:

Clinging to the ruin hoary,

Where Art pondering grieves,

Like youth supporting age and weakness,

Are glossy ivy leaves.

Welcome, then, the sturdy ivy,

Defying winter's cold,

Like friendship, when misfortune lours,

Clinging true and bold.

So, though we love the summer flowers,

Thank God for piled-up sheaves;

Yet, let us have a welcome still,

For glossy ivy leaves.

GEMS.

WHEN the idea of pleasure strikes your imagination, make a just computation between the duration of the pleasure and that of the repentance that is likely to follow it.

If you would be exempt from uneasiness, do nothing which you know or suspect is wrong; and if you wish to enjoy the purest pleasure always do everything in your power which you know is right.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE LORD MAYOR OF LONDON.—The present Lord Mayor, it is said, will be more than usually liberal in his entertainments, his late father having left him £10,000 for that special purpose.

WELL-RIDDLED TREES.—The trunks of two trees have been sent from the battle-field of Gettysburgh for the Massachusetts and Pennsylvania Historical Societies, one of them having 250 bullet-holes in the space of 21 feet, and the other 110.

THE COUNTESS DANNER.—It may not be interesting to read that the Countess Danner, the late King of Denmark's morganatic wife, was the daughter of a confectioner named Rasmussen, in Bielefeld, Prussia, where she was born.

THE TURKISH SULTAN.—The Sultan has despatched an autograph letter to the Emperor Napoleon, accepting his invitation to the Congress, with the full idea of being present thereof in person.

THE DANISH SUCCESSION.—Foreseeing that the complications which have arisen with regard to the Danish succession might cause a collision between Germany and Denmark, Earl Russell has hastened to

offer the mediation of England to King Christian IX. The latter has, however, declared that this mediation would only appear to him to be efficacious if the Emperor Napoleon's proposal of a congress were agreed to.

GARIBOLDI'S LIBERALITY.—Garibaldi has forwarded 1,100 francs for the poor of Vienna. This indirect way of sowing the seeds of discord has been politely declined by the Government.

DENMARK.—After Denmark has been excluded from the Federal Diet the entrance of German troops into Holstein, whether called Federal execution or occupation, will be regarded as a declaration of war. All the officials in the Duchy of Schleswig have taken the oath of allegiance to King Christian.

NEW ZEALAND INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION.—It is stated that the proposed Industrial Exhibition for New Zealand, to be held in 1865, is receiving the general support of the colony, and there is a probability of it being a great success. It is intended to be held in Dunedin, in January, 1865, and the Government of the province have come forward liberally towards the cost of the building. Great inducements will be held out to English machinists and manufacturers to contribute.

NEVER SULK.—Better draw the cork of your indignation, and let it foam and fume, than wire it down to turn sour and acrid within. Sulks effect the liver, and are still worse for the heart and soul. Dissipate it by reflecting on the mildness, humility and serenity of better men than yourself, suffering under greater wrongs than you have ever been called upon to bear.

THE SOVEREIGNS TO COMPOSE THE CONGRESS.—The Sovereigns who have personally accepted the Congress, and promised to visit Paris, are—the Queen of Spain, the King of the Belgians, the King of Sweden, the King of Portugal, the King of Italy, the King of Denmark, the Sultan, the King of Greece, and the Pope, if his health at the time will permit. There seems to be a possibility of a Congress minus the great Powers.

MOTHER'S LOVE.

THE first gleam of understanding in childhood is seen in its smile of recognition: it knows its mother before it knows itself; and it takes the commencing steps of the journey of life with

The name most loved for ever on its tongue.

It is a touching and wise provision of Providence, that the mother of our physical should be also the parent of our mental frame. The hand that soothes us to repose conducts us into knowledge:

Apart she joins his little hands in prayer,
Telling of Him who sees in secret there;
And now the Volume on her knee has caught
His wandering eye, now many a written thought
Never to die, with many a lisping sweet,
His moving, murmuring lips endeavour to repeat.

We are told by Plutarch, that Coriolanus loved truth for his mother's sake. How much livelier the impressions of truth which are received at the knee of a Christian parent! The history of early genius is often a pleasing episode in the history of mother's love. Curran said that he owed all his fame to that portion of treasure which his mother had given to him from her own mind. The eye of the mother, who stores up every word in her heart, discerns the latent feeling of taste and the awaking germ of curiosity. It is recorded of the great Alfred, that he was tempted to learn to read by the splendour of a manuscript which his mother promised him. A similar story is told of Chatterton. At five years of age he was sent to school, but made no progress in the acquirement of knowledge. At length his mother brought him home, and endeavoured to teach him to read out of an old black-letter Bible; but all her efforts were ineffectual, until the boy's eye was attracted by the illuminated capitals in a French musical manuscript. How the heart of Tasso's mother must have rejoiced when she received the first offering of his affectionate poetry! It must have rewarded all her watchfulness and anxiety. When only seven years old he commenced his studies with the rising sun, and longed so eagerly to begin at an early hour, that his mother often sent him to school before daybreak, with a lantern to show him the road. A poet, who loved Tasso, has recorded the ardour of his own childhood:

When I was yet a child, no childish play
To me was pleasing; all my mind was set
Serious to learn and know, and thence to do
What might be public good.

These are the lines of Milton. Sometimes, however, the vernal ray quickens the blossom into unseasonable bloom, and the fragile stem droops beneath the weight of the flower. The dew of praise, for the most part so salutary and cheering, destroys, while it seems to quicken, the power of vegetation; and the living energy of the plant expands itself in one burst of colour and fragrance.

BOOKS RECEIVED.

The Imperial Speaker. London: Harrison, Salisbury Square, Fleet Street.—This is an excellent selection of some of the best effusions of our most admired poets, printed in a clear type and issued in a neat form. Amongst the various readings are "The Field of Waterloo," by Byron; "The Battle of Hohenlinden," by Campbell; "Young Lochinvar," "Lord Ullin's Daughter," "Othello's Apology," "Tell's Speech," and many more of the very choicest specimens of poetical composition. Whilst the selection exhibits a high degree of taste, it also discloses a real appreciation of the bardic effusions of our most distinguished poetical countrymen, and is admirably adapted for the purposes for which it is designed. We heartily commend it to all who delight in the English classical subjects elected by the editor for reading and recitation.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

CORDELIA.—Artificial teeth are composed of two parts called the body and the enamel. The body of the tooth is made first, and the enamel is added last.

A YOUTH.—Under the title of Northern Islands, we include all those lying in the ocean to the North of Scotland, namely, Iceland, the Faroes, Shetland, and the Orkneys.

J. LONGMAX.—The asphodel was planted near tombs, because it was thought to be agreeable to the dead.

ARTER.—The Greeks never used coloured marble, from an opinion that it spoiled the effect of the sculpture.

R. CLAY.—We really do not know how you will cure such a boy of his laziness. Try the plan of sending him all your errands just before his meals. Perhaps that will be found an experiment that will quicken his footsteps.

MILTON.—A palm-tree was the symbol of Judaea as well as of Phenicia upon monuments.

AN AMATEUR.—The flute is an ancient instrument.

T. R.—Maroon is the name given to the free blacks living on the mountains of the West India Islands.

DUNCAN CAMPBELL.—You need not be alarmed; "take it coolly," as the father of Jacob Faithful said when his boy was drowned, there is still as much coal in England as will see out your life.

D. F.—No; neither white nor black are colours; the former being an entire reflection, and the latter a total absorption of all the rays of light.

A YOUNG ARTIST.—Wilkie has been denominated the Walter Scott of British painters, and Mulready the Goldsmith.

ARCHÆOLOGIST.—Yes; but the term tessellated is not now confined to different coloured stones laid chequer-wise or like dice; but is extended to all kinds of mosaic patterns or designs.

D. D. D.—For the Christmas evenings you cannot offer a better amusement to children than the funny representations on the slides of a magic lantern.

GEORGE HASBELL.—Ruskin's "Lectures on Architecture and Painting," delivered at Edinburgh. They are published by Smith, Elder, and Co., 65, Cornhill, London.

A JAMES.—The method of discovering to whom unknown heads in sculpture belong, is by comparing them with coins and other monuments.

A CORRESPONDENT.—Among fire-side amusements, singing, music, reciting passages from good authors, playing at draughts, chess, puzzles, riddles, forfeits may be included. There are others which are well-known, and which it is possible so to vary as to make the winter evenings pass not only pleasantly, but profitably.

D. BENTIN.—Of all articles of dress, the most mischievous that ever was invented are stays. Neither tight bands nor tight belts should be worn anywhere about the body; especially about either the neck or the waist.

S. RETFOLDS.—It is true that most people, in London, at least, strive to be rich; but you may rely upon it that it is not the wealthy, but the wise who avoid misery and become happy and blessed.

LEERIE.—Ennui is a French word for an English malady, which generally arises from the want of a want, and constitutes the complaint of those who have really nothing to complain of.

AGNES.—Which will you do—smile and make others happy, or be cross and make every one around you miserable? The amount of happiness you can produce is incalculable. If you show a smiling face and speak pleasant words. There is no joy like that which springs from the consciousness of having acted with kindness. It keeps turbulence from the breast and regret from the mind.

MARTIN LANE.—You seem to us not to have learned when to say one of the most important words in the English language—"No!" Remember that this monosyllable, though only composed of two letters, is the very corner-stone of the fabric we call manhood. Learn the use of this invaluable word, and you will soon find yourself on the road to peace, comfort, and safety. An easy compliance ruins everything. No friction is engendered in the character, and we experience none of the healthy shocks of a good honest resistance.

RALPH CARR.—I. Ivy is certainly injurious to plantations and natural woods of oak, when it is allowed to mount aloft among the branches and to muffle the foliage. So long, however, as it merely clings to the stem, even the oak takes no injury from it, and its growth may be checked as high as the hand can reach with the knife instead of at the ground. 2. Canker is often not the result of unfavourable soil, but of sudden refrigeration; the bark being often too thin and delicate to afford sufficient protection from atmospheric changes. Abundant underwood of hazel and ivy—not in excess, but in moderation—are the best preventions.

MARTINE.—With the exception of sovereigns who may be closely related, monarchs correspond by letters in which only the conclusion, or rather the *courtoisie*, is written with their own hand. The *courtoisie* is the compliment at the foot of the letters, and which, when the letter is addressed to an emperor or a king, is always in these terms—"I am, my brother and cousin, the good brother and cousin of your

majesty." Reciprocity is the rule followed in this respect; but in certain cases, and, above all, when the letter is counter-signed by the minister of foreign affairs, the signature only is in the hand of the sovereign, and the body of the letter is written by the under secretaries in the cabinet of the minister.

P. JONES.—Your philosophy is wrong. Jean Paul Richter says, "No one can either live piously or die righteously without a wife," and we endorse the sentiment. To desire to be married is natural to all properly-constituted minds, whether in men or women.

JEANIE.—Your conduct is false to yourself, and therefore foolish. You can never be happy in endeavouring to seem what you know you are not. Have the courage to appear poor, and you disarm poverty of its sharpest sting.

CATHERINE DE MEDICIS.—The colours selected by ladies for their dresses all depend upon the character or quality of their personal tastes. There is no rule for this, of which we are aware. An English poet of the last century, discoursing in verse upon female dress, quaintly recommends high colour, such as purple, red and orange to brunettes. He says:

The lass whose skin is, like the hazel, brown
With brighter colours should overcome her own.

To the blonde he recommends the colour of the skies or that of the sea;

Let the fair nymph, in whose fair cheek is seen
A rosy blush, be clad in cheerful green.

The pale beauty, however, must wear none of these colours.

Ladies grown pale with sickness or despair.

The sable mournful eye should choose to wear;

So the pale moon still shines with purest light,
Clad in the dusky mantle of the night.

JAMES R.—Wed her, by all means; but remember that, although marriages may be celebrated in bowers as fair as those of Eden, they must generally, in the end, be put to proof in the workshops of the world.

CLASSICUS.—The names in the Scriptures mostly have a meaning, and those of the Greeks always had one. Aristotle, for example, signifies good success.

PHOEBE.—When your friend affects airs of melancholy leave her company for a time. In a girl or woman such affectation is always disagreeable, and in a man it is as pitiable as it is offensive. It is a fashion that originally came from France, and the beaux of the reign of Queen Elizabeth greatly affected it.

S. S.—In answer to LILIA, begs to say that he thinks he will in every respect suit her. He is of a very loving disposition, of thorough business habits, and has an income of £200 a year. Does LILIA think she can safely trust her future happiness to him? He has

Black hair, pearly teeth, a fine fertile mind,
To marry and settle he is vastly inclined.

CLARA.—The earlier numbers of THE LONDON READER have been reprinted, and you can obtain them to complete your file by ordering them of your news-vendor, or by transmitting stamps for the numbers wanted to the publisher at the office. Handwriting very fair.

YOUNG HOUSEKEEPER.—The ordinary means employed for preserving butcher-meat, are drying, smoking, salting, pickling or souring.

S. A.—There is an oil called poppy oil. It is much used in painting.

A. E. G. (who is twenty-five) thinks "the best thing she can do is to get a good husband, if that is a possibility." She is about 5 ft. in height; has brown hair, hazel eyes, is neither handsome nor yet very plain, and is not afraid of work; in fact, thinks she could make a good housewife for a working man. She would not value good looks so much as a kind disposition and loving heart; she is capable of great affection, nor does she aspire to a man with a large income, though he must be very steady and sober. He must be

Tall, dark;
A fond loving heart, and a well-informed mind.

C. O. LUCAS.—We will ascertain, if you tell us which occasion you mean, as the chapel has been burnt more than once. The last occasion was about five years ago, when the front was burnt out.

AMICUS.—Walnut was the common wood for furniture in England, till it was superseded by mahogany.

A PLATOON.—It was so in the time of Shakespeare. We have seen an old engraving of the Globe Theatre, upon which a flag was exhibited to announce the time of performance.

JESSICA.—The earliest artificial flowers known to us are those of the paper garlands which appeared in churches, and those of the Italian nuns in the seventeenth century, which were entirely modern.

P. MITCHELL.—1. Charcoal for chemical purposes may be extemporaneously prepared by calcining pieces of wood covered with sand in a crucible, till no more volatile matter exhales. 2. It was Lowitz who discovered that wood charcoal removes offensive smells from animal and vegetable substances, and counteracts their putrefaction.

A PHOTOGRAPHER.—The stereoscope was not invented by Sir David Brewster, but by Professor Wheatstone. It was modified by Sir David, by means of which modification, two images of the same object, depicted on paper—as those images would be depicted on the retina of each eye—are resolved into an apparent solid of three dimensions.

ANNE LILIA.—Your letter does very great credit both to your head and heart. We have read it attentively; and think you will best consult your own self-respect by persevering a little longer in the course you have adopted. If your lover truly loves you, he will admire your self-assertion and respect for principle all the more for the little "tiff." If he does not, he is not worthy of you; and, as Shakespeare says, you may let him "down the wind" without regret.

A LAMON.—We do not at all agree with your theory. Our opinion is that a really wise man never rests out. As long as he can breathe and move about, he will be doing something for himself, his neighbour, or posterity. Look at Brougham, Palmerston, Earl Russell, the late Lord Lyndhurst, and many more we could name, who almost to the last hour of their lives, were at work; so were Howard and Newton. The vigour of their lives was decayed; but no rust gathered round their spirits. It is a foolish idea that we must lie down and die, and merely because we are old; but who is old? He only is old who suffers his energies to waste

away, and the spring of life to become motionless; on whose hands the hours drag heavily, and in whose eyes all things seem veiled in a cloud of gloom. There are hundreds of grey-headed men who, in any important enterprise, we should prefer to such young gentlemen as fear and tremble at the approach of shadow.

SAM. GOOD.—Two or three drops of essential oil of cloves, put upon a small piece of lint or cotton wool, and placed in the hollow of the tooth, will be found to have the power of curing the toothache without destroying the teeth or injuring the gums. Handwriting requires much improvement.

FRED. C.—The lines to "Lizzie Lee," are evidently the production of a very youthful muse, and are scarcely equal to our requirements. They are, however, very creditable to the writer; and we dare say his love for Lizzie Lee will inspire him to try his poetical powers again, with, perhaps, better success.

ERNEST desires to make known the important fact that he is willing to communicate with any young lady with a view to matrimony; he is 5 ft. 7 in. in height; has light hair, is twenty years of age, and will before long have a small property. He will be happy to exchange *cartes-de-vistes*.

GENIUS (who informs us that she is a young lady of pleasing manners) wishes to know "what we think of her face and figure; she has blue eyes, is neither very light nor very dark, and has light hair, regular features, tall, and rather inclined to be stout; age, seventeen." We can only reply that GENIUS is certainly attractive.

LEAH.—Under the circumstances, there is not, perhaps, any actual impropriety in receiving presents of the kind you mention, if you are affianced; otherwise, we should certainly, in your place, prefer that your lover's presents should assume some other form, as more consistent with propriety and general usage. Handwriting good; colour of hair very light brown.

JANE ROBERTS.—Yes; crimping the hair is going out of fashion; but you are mistaken if you fancy it is only a modern practice. Even the Romans used crimping, and which, however, were not like ours, being merely like large skewers, round which the hair was turned. Towards the end of the twelfth century our ancestors curled their hair with these, bound it with fillets or ribbands, and went abroad without hats to show it.

DELIA.—Many methods have been adopted for the preservation of stuffed animals. Mr. Waterson made use of corrosive sublimate dissolved in alcohol. The skin of the animal being separated, is dipped in the solution and dried. The inside of the animal is always removed, the bones scraped clean and dipped, the feathers or hairs touched by the solution, or the whole immersed in it. Sometimes alcohol of 60 or 70 per cent is used, or alcohol of 30 per cent with creosote dissolved in it.

T. MOPPAL.—The fibres of hemp which compose a rope seldom exceed in length three feet and a half at an average. They must, therefore, be mixed together so as to unite them into one; and this union is effected by the mutual compression of the two fabrics. Should the compression thereby produced be too great, the strength of the fibres at the points where they join will be diminished; so that it becomes a matter of great consequence to give them only such a degree of twist as is essential to their union.

SCIMBO.—We do not admire the tone of your letter; and tell you so frankly, as the expression of our opinion may, perhaps, lead you to cultivate a better frame of mind. Parents have a right to all the love and duty of their children; and a right, also, to control them judiciously in the choice of a partner for life. Wait until you are competent in age to take a wife, and able in position to maintain one. Show the young lady's parents that you can support her properly, and then, most likely, they will not oppose your suit.

BELL. WORTH writes: "I am tall, have dark hair, hazel eyes, good teeth, and regular features; I am eighteen and rather inclined to be stout. I want you to tell me candidly if I am pretty or not?" Our bachelor readers will probably find no difficulty in answering this question in the affirmative; no doubt more than one of them will consider BELL WORTH a *belle* worth ringing.

BOWMONT KENNA is enchanted with **LOVING POLLY's** description of herself and her ideal; and wishes to be presented to her notice. He is twenty-four years of age, in possession of a good income, and has a loving heart; is light-haired, good-looking, and temperate, with a decided inclination for domestic comforts; and would be extremely happy to correspond with her or exchange *cartes-de-vistes*. Will **LOVING POLLY** take this handsome offer into consideration?

GORILLA.—As the art and mystery of astrology is not in the present day in a very flourishing condition, its "professors" are few, and they rather court obscurity than seek to make themselves known; for which, no doubt, they have very good reasons. We cannot, therefore, afford you any information; but we may give you a bit of advice—and that is, never mind "getting your horoscope cast," but stick to your business; which will have very much more influence on your future than any astrological charlatan's "reading of the stars."

MISERABLE CHARLEY says that he is "sadly in want of a helpmate," because—and the reason is certainly very naive—"it seems to him that he cannot do anything right." He adds: "I am about 5 ft. 9 in. in fair complexion, and am told by my male friends that I am passably good-looking. The lady also must be good-looking; but money no object. I should not like her too tall." We make known **CHARLEY's** case; but, for the peculiar reason assigned by himself, do not think he is very likely to succeed in his search for a wife.

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London: Printed and Published for the Proprietor, at 334, Strand, by J. E. GELDER.